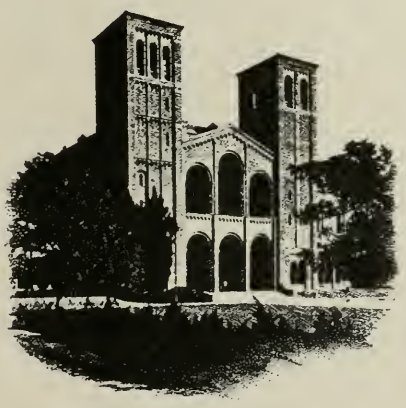
CARTE ITALIANE

A Journal of Italian Studies



Volume 2 1980-81

Department of Italian, UCLA

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CONTENTS

Foreword v

An Interview with Danilo Dolci 1
Teresa Lazazzera

Leon Battista Alberti on *Virtù* and *Fortuna* 9
Mark G. Henninger

The conversion of Manzoni's l'Innominato or, The Repressed Catholic Consciousness of a Criminal 27
Annette Leddy

Verga and the Realist Cinema 43
Robert Spiegel

Traduzione: Tre Poesie di Bert Meyers 57
Ted Cachey

List of Contributors 63

Ph.D. Dissertations in Italian Studies at UCLA, 1970–81 65

FOREWORD

Carte Italiane is a graduate student journal which publishes articles in all areas of Italian Studies, including Italian, Comparative, and Romance Literature, Art History, Philosophy, and Folklore, as well as translations of poetry and scholarly works in English and Italian.

The contents of our second volume range from papers by students in Philosophy, Comparative Literature, and Cinema, to translations of poems by American poet Bert Meyers, to an interview with poet and non-violent activist Danilo Dolci, who participated with students and faculty in a poetry "laboratorio" at UCLA in January of this year.

Papers published in this volume were selected from contributions solicited from all University of California campuses. In the future, we intend to further expand our format to include contributions from campuses nationwide.

Publication of *Carte Italiane* is funded in large part by the Graduate Students Association of UCLA, and I would like to thank them for their support. I would also like to commend the students and professors of the Editorial and Advisory Boards, too many to name individually, who contributed not only many hours of hard and often tedious work, but also gave freely of both their criticism and encouragement, each as needed. In particular, we are all grateful to Professor Carlo Chiarenza of the University of British Columbia, who, when he decided to come to UCLA as a visiting professor, perhaps did not realize that we would place such great demands on his time and

expertise, but who kindly contributed much of both. We also thank Professor Marga Cottino-Jones for her support of this project, and most of all, we owe many thanks to Ms. Clorinda Donato, last year's Managing Editor, and now Project Coordinator at the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, who gave us both the example of last year's excellent volume, and much of her advice and time at critical moments, which helped to make this year's volume possible.

Cynthia Craig
Editor

AN INTERVIEW WITH DANILO DOLCI

TERESA LAZAZZERA

Danilo Dolci, Italian poet and non-violent social activist, was present as a Visiting Professor at UCLA during the Winter Quarter of 1981 to take part in the teaching of a course on Italian political writers and activists. In addition to introductory discussions on the history of Dolci's community activism in the context of contemporary Italian militant writers and the climate of social violence, the seminar included a two week intensive reading of Dolci's poetry combined with his personal perspective on the creative process of poetry writing and the experiences which gave birth to his commitment to non-violent social reform. Dolci described this part of the seminar as a poetry "laboratorio" whose purpose was to place his works in their living context and to conduct research on the problems of our times. During the course of this seminar, participants learned the particular meanings which Dolci's words have acquired through the continuous refining process of social change and the new linguistic requirements which arose from it.

Danilo Dolci is the author of many works, including *Report from Palermo, The Man Who Walks Alone, Waste, The Outlaws of Partinico, Poverty in Sicily,* and *Creature of Creatures.* Despite his many achievements, including a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize, and the award of the Lenin Peace Prize (1957) and the Sonning Prize

(1971), Dolci is an approachable and modest man, who requested that students address him with the familiar "tu".

The following is the text of an interview conducted at UCLA during Dolci's seminar, in which he discusses the seminar itself, as well as his continuing efforts for social change.

(Special thanks are owed to Peggy Kidney and Nicoletta Tinozzi for their assistance in editing and transcribing this interview.)

—Ed. Note

Teresa: Cominciamo con il seminario. Secondo te, com'è andato?

Danilo: Ho cercato di pensare a proposito di questo seminario che è finito ieri dopo due settimane, che senso abbia avuto, quale ne sia stato il frutto; e i punti essenziali sono questi. Primo, sono profondamente lieto che sia esistito, e questo mi pare sufficente. Ecco, lo scopo del seminario era di mettere in discussione dei testi poetici, nel loro contesto vivo come in un laboratorio. La caratteristica del seminario era una ricerca di studenti e professori insieme. Cioè, l'autore era semplicemente un ponte, un punto per la verifica. Perchè c'è stato questo seminario? C'è un enorme «gap» genetico tra la cultura di ieri e la situazione di oggi. Quest'enorme «gap» può essere affrontato e superato soltanto da una cultura in ricerca estremamente creativa. Se lo studio di Petrarca, per esempio, fu apprezzato ai suoi tempi, non si può dire altrettanto degli artisti nostri contemporanei i quali non vengono apprezzati da noi. E questo non mi pare giusto; infatti, ricercando io qui nei negozi piu qualificati questi giorni, non ho trovato la musica importante di oggi. Non ho trovato la musica de Pendereski o la musica di Richetti ma non ho trovato nemmeno alcune composizioni di Ives. Allora mi pare molto importante che ci sia anche nei corsi di lingua, oltre alla possibilità di imparare una lingua e di intendere, come si può, una cultura, la possibilità di partecipare alla ricerca avanzata che c'è sui problemi della vita del nostro tempo. Gli studenti devono attrezzarsi con degli strumenti che

permettano l'interpetazione del mondo di oggi e permettano la formazione in ciascuno di interventi che modificano la realtà che è necessaria a oggi. Questo nella scienza tante volte si fa e i giovani che la studiano, crescendo con la ragione storica di quello che stanno facendo, cercano per prove più avanzate e questo dovrebbe essere anche nelle «humanities.» Un altro punto io direi, non vorrei che dimenticassimo che il '68 è esistito. Il '68 è stato una protesta. Un bisogno profondissimo è quello di sapere che non soltanto l'adulto, l'insegnante, ha una sua esperienza ma anche ciascuno dei ragazzi ha una sua esperienza, una sua personalità e ci dev'essere la possibilità di produrre una dialettica profonda dei propri valori. Questo mi pare molto importante. Perchè in tutti, poi, cade la protesta se non si assimila sufficientemente e quello che rimane è l'esigenza.

Teresa: In questi pochi giorni noi abbiamo imparato molto da te, ma cosa hai imparato tu da noi?

Danilo: Sono stato veramente anche emozionato da certe semplici domande che, nelle loro semplicità, erano estremamente provocatorie. Per esempio, quando qualcuno domandava «come si impara a vedere» era come un bambino che fa «bam» e spalanca tutto. Oppure quando qualcuno diceva «come si fluisce della poesia» e «quale dev'essere il rapporto del lettore?» È stato questo semplice spalancare di problemi, io dico, che non poteva venire che dagli studenti. Una freschezza enorme che ha suscitato delle discussioni molto fertili. E qui sono intervenuti anche professori e sono rimaste certe volte aperte queste questioni ma, questo è importante, soltanto dagli interrogativi possono venire delle soluzioni. Se non ci sono interrogativi, non c'è nulla.

Teresa: Tu parlavi della situazione di oggi della quale dobbiamo renderci conto. Precisamente come vedi questa situazione?

Danilo: Io non so se oggi la gente senta con le ossa quante bombe atomiche ci sono nel mondo. La gente con la testa ha la nozione che ci sono delle bombe atomiche perchè ha sentito dire così ma, in realtà, tanti pensano con una testa vecchia. I bambini oggi pensano alla situazione diversamente perchè i bambini certe volte vedono delle nuvole ed immaginano la bomba atomica. Queste cose devono

entrare proprio nella circolazione del sangue. L'istinto deve diventare diverso. Qui si ricorda che ogni minuto l'umanità spende 1,200,000 dollari per gli armamenti. Un milione e due cento mila dollari spesi ogni sessanta secondi per gli armamenti in un mondo che oggi dovrebbe diventare uno. Il mondo ha la necessità di riconoscere la sua sostanziale unità ma deve capire qual'è quest'unità. Che tipo di unità? Unità come? E cosa significa unità? Allora la necessità di unificarsi oggi si può vedere da molti direzioni. Ci sono i congressi di fisica, chimica e medicina e le distanze vengono annullate dai mezzi di trasporto, dal telefono e dalla radio. C'è anche la lingua. Le lingue lustre stanno diventando dialetti. Alcuni anni fa il danese e il norvegese, per esempio, erano delle lingue ma ora queste lingue stanno diventando dialetti e la lingua sta diventando inglese. Allora quest'esigenza di unità, dall'altra parte, ha il rischio, credo, di essere un'unità imposta e quello che è imposto blocca. Da questo mi pare derivi la grande importanza di tutti i lavori che si sviluppano dalle radici. C'è non soltanto la cultura dei locali ma anche lo sviluppo della cultura individuale. Dalla terra locale ci sono delle popolazioni semplici che hanno dei profondi valori locali. Vogliamo che si sprechino questi valori locali o vogliamo invece che si sviluppino naturalmente? Da una parte queste culture hanno valori, da una parte no. Perciò si dovrebbe sviluppare la condizione buona e cercare di eliminare quella che non è buona. Credo che ci sia una bipolarità, che debba essere raggiunto tra un dialogo profondo tra i simboli della cultura e lo sviluppo della terra locale.

Teresa: Io non ho mai vissuto una guerra. Non so cosa sia veramente.

Danilo: Questa tua osservazione è molto importante. Io sono stato a Hiroshima per un congresso ed ho visitato la città. La città era tutta ricostruita. Non c'era più un segno della guerra. Ho domandato al sindaco «Perchè non avete lasciato un chilometro quadrato così com'era? Sarebbe importante che tutti i bambini del mondo potessero vedere e capire cosa è successo.» E lui mi ha risposto prima dicendo che la terra è cara. Allora io gli ho detto «Ma la pelle degli uomini, la vita degli uomini e molto più cara.» E lui mi ha risposto «Non ci deve pensare.» E il risultato di tutto questo è che quando io sono stato a Hiroshima il dieci per cento della popolazione adulta non sapeva che a Hiroshima fosse esplosa una bomba atomica.

Teresa: C'è sempre la tendenza a dimenticare o coprire questi disastri.

Danilo: Sì, sì. Soprattutto quando c'è un senso di colpa si cerca di coprire. Non è per caso che in Germania i lager stiano scomparendo. L'edera vi si arrampica sopra e pezzo a pezzo li fa scomparire. Si può vedere Auschwitz perchè è in territorio polacco e allora è difesa in modo che tutti la possano vedere. Intanto stanno nascendo i nuovi lager perchè le fabbriche in un certo senso certe volte sono dei lager, dei baraccamenti dove mandano tutti quanti insieme a lavorare. Ma tante volte non si ha il coraggio di vedere perchè vedere è sofferenza. Vedere è capire.

Teresa: Quali sono stati nel tuo lavoro gli ostacoli più difficili da superare?

Danilo: Da una parte l'ostacolo determinato dagli impedimenti allo sviluppo strutturale e dall'altra parte il grande ostacolo è la difficoltà di riuscire a mettere in moto dei processi per l'interpretazione della realtà, mettere in moto dei processi che creano nella loro dinamica anche il motore di uno sviluppo. Può solo riuscire ad avviare o a partecipare allo sviluppo di un processo.

Teresa: Come intendi il cambiamento?

Danilo: La domanda è importante. Io credo che non si possa cambiare nè dal di fuori, nè dal di dentro. È soltanto in base alla partecipazione che si può cambiare. Se uno è dentro con una sola prospettiva non riesce a cambiare. D'altra parte se uno viene dal di fuori per tentare il cambiamento è come il lievito che non può lievitare fuori della pasta. Il lievito dev' essere dentro la pasta, nel pane. Se il lievito è fuori, non ne viene niente. Allora l'importante è proprio tener presente che la Terra è veramente una città. Fuori e dentro è molto relativo. Si deve cercare di fare in modo che ciascuno oggi possa partecipare di più. Ci vogliono diversi punti di vista. Occorre ed è proprio necessario il respiro di diverse realtà per effettuare cambiamenti. Il cambiamento obbedisce ad una necessità molto profonda anche se la gente non lo sa. Gli uccelli hanno capito certe cose molto meglio di noi uomini. Gli uccelli che emigrano concepiscono la Terra nelle sue stagioni e cercano di adeguarsi, di trovare una diversa realtà che sia più adeguata a loro. Hanno capito molto.

Teresa: Allora quello che conta è capire?

Danilo: Prima è necessario interpretare. Interpretare, non risolvere.

Interpretare è essenziale. Se non si interpreta, non si può risolvere. Bisogna interpretare a livello di persona, a livello di gruppi, a livello di strutture. Il primo passo per riuscire a interpretare è stabilire un colloquio, ma non può esserci un colloquio se non ci si intende.

Teresa: Si è parlato degli italiani che sono venuti in America lasciando la loro situazone perchè pensavano che fosse impossibile cambiarla. Cosa diresti a loro?

Danilo: Naturalmente molto dipende dalle esperienze che una persona ha fatto e dalle esperienze che una popolazione ha fatto. Ad una esperienza che è da secoli e secoli statica corrisponde la teoria che il mondo è sempre stato così e non cambierà. Se, però, l'esperienza diventa esperienza del possibile, sia a livello personale e tanto meglio a livello di gruppo, la gente non si rifiuta di ammettere questa possibilità che diventa la nuova realtà, la nuova esperienza riconoscendo che lo sviluppo è possibile. Per questo sono molto importanti tutti i «take-off.» Bisogna riconoscere che il cambiamento non può piovere dal cielo. Il cambiamento, perchè possa veramente diventare una realtà deve avvenire contemporaneamente a tre livelli: a livello personale, a livello di gruppo, e a livello di struttura. Per l'uomo oggi è molto difficile concepire quest'idea di cambiamento che si svolge a tre livelli contemporaneamente. È molto difficile, ma è necessario per superare il «gap».

Teresa: Ci parleresti del lavoro che svolgi coi bambini—un lavoro che tu ritieni sia molto importante?

Danilo: Io credo che il lavoro più difficile sia quello che viene svolto coi bambini. Trovo una mancanza di senso nel fatto che i professori universitari abbiano degli stipendi superiori a quelli degli insegnanti delle scuole materne perchè interpretare i bambini piccoli è ancora più difficile che interpretare gli adulti. Piaget ha ragione quando dice che prima dei sei o sette anni, grosso modo, la persona si è già formata. Dopo non si può cambiare, si può solo affinare perchè la personalità, nella sua ossatura essenziale, è fissata. Vorrei a questo proposito presentare i punti di partenza del nostro centro sperimentale. Primo punto: i bambini non sono degli idioti. Hanno una loro curiosità, dei loro interessi vitali, ma tante volte non li conoscono. Allora bisogna aiutarli a individuare queste curiosità, questi interessi e cercare di fare in modo che si passi dalla naturale

curiosità a dei veri e propri metodi di ricerca. Secondo punto: Io insisto nel ritenere che le persone, in genere, sono molto distratte. La gente pensa di vedere, ma non vede. Deve imparare a vedere, imparare ad ascoltare e a sentire. Ecco, mi pare che avere un rapporto diretto con la realtà sia essenziale per intendere questa realtà perchè vedere vuol dire anche comunicare. Non è soltanto un fatto passivo. È un fatto che ha suo fine. Terzo punto: È essenziale fare in modo che si avvii anche coi bambini piccoli, un movimento che partendo dal processo in cui viene enucleato il desiderio giunga a forme vere e proprie di azione perchè è possibile arrivare ad imparare a decidere insieme. È difficile, ma non impossibile. E quando si impara a decidere insieme, tutto quello che si costruisce acquista una qualità diversa, molto diversa da quella che troviamo in tutto ciò che è stato più o meno suggerito o tanto più imposto. Questo è il concetto base.

Teresa: Quali sono i tuoi progetti per il futuro?

Danilo: Uno dei fronti più importanti per il quale ci siamo molto impegnati è quello dello sviluppo locale soprattutto per quanto riguarda l'adozione di un sistema di democratizzazione e di valorizzazione dell'acqua*, e lo sviluppo del nostro centro educativo per i bambini dai tre ai quindici anni rappresenta una difficoltà estrema perchè significa inventare, se si può dire così, educatore, famiglie, tradizioni nuove; è un enorme lavoro che richiede naturalmente anche la valorizzazione di quello che già stato concepito nel mondo in sedi separate. Per esempio, Frank Oppenheimer ha lavorato benissimo qui in California nel campo della pedagogia della scienza, ma la sua esperienza rischia di rimanere isolata. Gli esperimenti rischiano di non avere rapporti tra di loro ed è appunto per questo che il lavoro di integrazione, di valorizzazione degli esperimenti, è così necessario. Io credo molto nel tipo di lavoro che ho svolto qui a UCLA ed è appunto per questo che sono venuto. Il lavoro che svolgo a Partinico è lavoro di laboratorio e questo tipo di lavoro richiede il contatto con altri laboratori dove ci siano persone aperte ad un certo tipo di verifica. Non sono infatti i concetti che si sviluppano ma sono invece le persone, con affinità elettiva, che provocano l'apertura di un nuovo fronte. Infine credo che sia importante oggi, in una situazione di crisi generale, cioè di vera e

propria disperazione, lavorare molto sul fronte del concepire. Credo che la crisi oggi sia in gran parte da attribuire ad una crisi di concezione. Occorre avere il coraggio di insistere nel tentativo di formare le basi di una nuova visione, di una nuova concezione. Uso la parola concepire nel senso di ideare e generare una visione diversa. Se, per esempio, il mondo fosse concepito come una sola città terrestre e se gli economisti e i sociologi lavorassero con la popolazione a produrre questa visione, allora si sarebbe fatto un passo avanti notevole, in direzione opposta al mondo disgregato, il mondo in cui si cerca di elidersi e di sopraffarsi reciprocamente. In un mondo che ha le bombe atomiche credo sia essenziale arrivare alla visione del mondo come creatura. Se ciò avviene allora forse ci sarà una possibilità di sopravvivenza. Altrimenti è la disperazione. Ed è proprio nel momento in cui la disperazione è maggiore e i rischi sono maggiori che bisogna fare uno sforzo enorme di riconcezione.

*La costruzione di una diga porta acqua «democratica», invece di acqua controllata dalla mafia, nell'area da irrigare. Questo rappresenta uno dei primi tentativi da parte del movimento locale dei contadini, di sottrarsi all'ingerenza della mafia. Accanto alla realizzazione di questa prima diga, altre undici dighe sono in programma o sono già in costruzione nella Sicilia occidentale. *(Creatura di Creature,* Introduzione di J. Vitiello p. xii)

LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI ON *VIRTÙ* AND *FORTUNA*

MARK G. HENNINGER

In writing the first Italian grammar, Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) illustrated the similarities between Latin and Italian based on the theory of the latter evolving from the former. In accomplishing this, and in writing many of his own works in Italian, he was a key figure in elevating the vernacular from its subservience to Latin. His accomplishments in architecture, both in theory and practice, are better known, as, to a lesser extent, are his contributions to painting, e.g., a mathematically based theory of perspective and insights into composition and content that would influence the course of renaissance painting. He found time to devote his considerable attention to literature, the theory of education, satire, sculpture, map-making, mathematical games, and even a fool-proof code for papal messages!

As other renaissance men of letters, Alberti was concerned with the problem of *virtù* and *fortuna.* To what extent are our lives the result of our own efforts and desires, of our own moral qualities *(virtù),* and to what extent are they determined by factors outside our control—by birth, or in Alberti's case by illegitimacy, education, natural disasters, disease—in short, by *fortuna?* As Alberti moved from his young student days to early manhood to middle age and into old age, his views on this problem seem to have changed. At least different emphases

are found in his writings, and these in turn reflect the circumstances in which he lived. In this paper, I trace these changes upon the larger background of his life, itself a product of *virtù* and *fortuna*.

In order to illustrate the progression from his earlier to his later views, I have used the following fiction. I pretend that an industrious bibliophile recently has discovered three manuscripts. Each fictional manuscript is purported to have been written by Alberti at a different time in his life.

In the first 'codex', Alberti tells us what he, at about thirty years of age, thinks about the views on *virtù* and *fortuna* he held during his student days. The second 'codex' gives us the views of Alberti, now sadder and wiser at forty, on his optimistic thirties while in Rome and Florence. The third and final 'codex' has Alberti, an old man, reviewing his life, surprised at the pessimism that surfaced in his writings on *virtù* and *fortuna* during his forties. I then end with a straightforward account of his last work in Italian, *De Iciarchia,* written when he was about sixty-five.

The basis for the ideas found in the fictional codices are, of course, the actual writings of Alberti as indicated in the notes. I have tried to clarify with additional notes any doubts that one may have as to what specifically is fact and what is fiction.

* * *

The first 'manuscript' (Vat. Lat. 375) dates from either the early 1430's when Alberti was in Rome, or a little later when he was visiting Florence. I pretend that Alberti rereads his early *De Commodis Litterarum atque Incommodis* (On the Advantages and Disadvantages of Letters), written after 1428, the year he finished his studies in Bologna. He decides to settle accounts with these early views.

'I would hope that anyone in the future reading my *De Commodis* would recall my youth, my inexperience, and especially the grim conditions that were forced upon me. These latter were particularly vivid at that time: the social stigma of my illegitimacy, the death of my father a few years before, my sickness and poverty, and finally the constant injustices visited upon me by my dull relatives. They had little sympathy for or understanding of my humanistic studies. Their attitude was summed up in the words of my old friend and relative

Giannozzo, "he is worthy of hate who wishes to be preferred to those who are wealthy because of his literary merits."[1]

'It is upon this background that one can appreciate the dual theme of *De Commodis:* a condemnation of society at large, caught up in what I thought was a frenzied pursuit of wealth, honor, and glory, and praise of the solitary life of the scholar who pursues good letters despite the lack of material rewards and recognition. And I see now I let myself voice the perennial humanist complaint, lamenting the discrepancy between the lucrative professions of law and medicine[2] and the shambles of humanist education. At that time, how could I see my career as anything else than that of a poor itinerant teacher of letters? How few humanists at that time were employed by princes and Popes! Not being myself in the mainstream of society, how could I be anything but suspicious (and perhaps envious) of the commercial-minded centers like Florence and Venice?

'And so it seemed to me certain that to be virtuous one does not need, and should actually flee from, riches and pleasures. As I wrote at the time,

> Chi vorrà invero havere lo animo suo ornatissimo, è necessario che veramente disprezzi, odii e abborrisca quelle brutture che si chiamano piaceri e quelle inimiche capitali della virtù che si chiamano abbondanzie e ricchezze . . . honori e grandezza.[3]

(I translate my early Latin into Tuscan, for these pages are written to be useful in some small way to my fellow man. And how can they be of use if very few can read them?)

'I can scarcely believe I wrote those words. Was I so enamored of the medieval ascetical tradition? I think not. It was the stoics of antiquity that drew me. If *fortuna* is a necessary chain of events from which there is no escape, what is the wise man to do? Essentially, he should become a stoic:

> Tutti i così fatti piaceri adunque del senso, così come non si concedono alle lettere, così ancora non se ne debbe tenere conto. Se ci nuocono grandemente, grandemente ancora si debbono fuggire.[4]

I felt I must flee anything that would disturb my soul:

> Imparino [i saggi] a fuggire i piaceri, sprezzare le ricchezze, non tener conto delle pompe, non haver paura della fortuna, e ad acquistarsi la sola quiete dello animo, i costumi, la virtù, e la sapientia.[5]

To live virtuously was to pursue wisdom alone, and to achieve this one need only have no regard for anything that disturbed one's study.

> Ma io ho giudicato che quanto agli studii delle lettere ci bisogni esser di questo animo, ch'altri si debba risolvere, che fuori della cognitione delle cose noblissime, tutti gl'altri beni della fortuna, s'habbin'a stimar poco, che noi ci dobbiamo contentare solo della sapientia.[6]

'Further, if one did not attain some degree of wisdom and *virtù,* it was one's own fault, not that of *fortuna.* I still believe today as firmly as I did then in one's own personal responsibility. I cannot imagine ever losing my faith in it. It is foolish to blame *fortuna.* Often those who manage families or lead nations complain of being buffeted by the storms and floods of fortune. Fools! *They* threw themselves into the flood.[7]

'But lest the reader think I stayed cramped up with my books, knowing nothing of the joys and beauties of nature, recall that I then also wrote

> l'huomo [è] più eccellente di qual si voglia altro animale sì in molte altre cose, sì ancora per questo di gran lunga agli altri superiore, che egli ha una certa cognitione e forza di discorso, per la quale si può credere che le menti degli huomini non sieno molto inferiori alla natura delle creature celesti. Conciosiache è cosa manifesta che tutte le cose che muovono in Mare et in Terra sono sottoposte agli ingegni degli huomini. Et per questo tutti confessono che l'huomo è il più honorato animale che si truovi fatto dalla natura.[8]

I still believe that man's ability to understand and control nature is part of his essence. But after coming to this glorious city, how much more varied and wide-ranging do I now conceive that curiosity, that divine ability to change and to perfect nature for man's own purposes. Painting, architecture, maintaining a household, running a business —none of this had yet entered my head as I ended my studies. Instead I felt

> Veramente, di tutti i piaceri il più eccellente e da nobili e ben nati è lo andare a spasso per le città e per le Provincie, e il considerare infinite cose, i tempii, i teatri e le muraglie e ogni sorte di edifitii, a andare atorno esaminando i luoghi di lor natura amenissimi, i grati, i fortissimi, e quegli che e dalla natura e dallo artificio degli huomini sieno stati fatti più gratisosi a riguardargli.[9]

Written as a typical student. I felt it was through renunciation, through controlling oneself that one arrives at self-knowledge and dominion over oneself. Only then can one truly appreciate nature, delighting in its variety. The pleasures of the world can be enjoyed, but only by him who is detached from them, not involved in the affairs of the world, whose mind is almost like a theater on which the world can be watched.[10]

'In sum, not knowing very much of the world, and what I knew being for the most part hostile, I conceived the sphere in which one could exercise true *virtù* to be very circumscribed. I felt that to act virtuously outside that limited sphere, to try to incarnate one's values in the affairs of men, would destroy one's inner peace and tranquility. Happily my future as a self-contained stoic was lost shortly after I arrived in this city.'

* * *

The second 'codex' (Codex Assisi 154) seems to date from the early 1440's, and throws some light on the causes for his unexpected despair and disillusionment with human affairs at that time.

'O Fortuna! Inconstancy, disease, death, avarice, and jealousy! The one woman I loved, L.M., walks out on me (then, by chance, is taken away by the plague!). My stupid relations, thinking erroneously that they would gain my wealth if I were to die, attempt to poison me, and, purely by accident, they fail. And what "friend" hasn't attacked me through jealousy?[11] Like Petrarch, maligned himself, I am forced to defend my work *La Famiglia* [1433–34], explaining now what were then my views on *virtù* and *fortuna.*

'At that time I strongly believed that man has within himself the capacity to govern his own destiny. What many say is brought about by *fortuna* can be avoided by prudence, initiative, and diligence. The enemies of *virtù,* I believed, were no longer pleasures, riches, and

honor. I believed that the humanists in Rome had all these and were still virtuous. I discovered that one need not be a stoic to be virtuous. In fact, I conceived *virtù* to be a bundle of moral qualities:

> E se così si conosce la virtù, costumi e opere virili, le quali tanto sono de' mortali quanto e' le vogliono, i consigli ottimi, la prudenza, i forti, constanti e perseveranti animi, la ragione, ordine e modo, le buone arti e discipline, l'equità, la iustizia, la diligenza e cura delle cose adempieno e abracciano tanto imperio, e contro l'insidiosa fortuna salgono in ultimo suppremo grado a fastigio di gloria.[12]

Virtù was no longer found simply in a tranquil mind, in conquering one's passions, but rather these moral qualities could be exercised, have an effect, outside of the cell of the scholar. My thinking at that time was that *fortuna,* chance events in the world, can never rob one of *virtù,* of these internal moral qualities. It is through these qualities, by acting with zeal, method, and order, that one can accomplish great things in the world. Therefore, since *fortuna* cannot ever conquer these internal qualities, as long as one stands firm, *fortuna* herself will be conquered in the world of affairs, and one can accomplish one's plans. And, finally, this *virtù* is available to everyone: «Solo è sanza virtù chi nolla vuole.»[13]

Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni, the first two humanist chancellors of Florence, saw the proper sphere for the exercise of *virtù* in civic affairs. I had no such experience in Florentine civic life, and not by my own choice.[14] Rather for me it was the family and the empires of the past—here I saw that *virtù* was the key to their growth and decline.

> Ma se alcuno con diligenza qui vorrà investigare qual cosa molto estolla e accresca le famiglie, qual anche le mantenga in sublime grado d'onore e di felicità, costui apertamente vederà gli uomini le più volte aversi d'ogni suo bene cagione e d'ogni suo male, né certo ad alcuna cosa tanto attribuirà imperio, che mai giudichi ad acquistare laude, amplitudine e fama non più valere la virtù che la fortuna. Vero, e cerchisi le republiche, ponghisi mente a tutti e' passati principati: troverassi che ad acquistare e multiplicare, mantenere e conservare la maiestate e gloria già conseguita, in alcuna mai più valse la fortuna che le buone e sante discipline del vivere. E che dubita?[15]

I had broken out of an individualistic conception of *virtù* to see its social dimensions.

> Non fece la natura gli uomini tutti d'una compressione, d'uno ingegno e d'uno volere, né tutti a un modo atti e valenti. Anzi volse che in quello in quale io manco, ivi tu supplisca, e in altra cosa manchi la quale sia apresso di quell'altro. Perché questo? Perch'io abbia di te bisogno, tu di colui, colui d'uno altro, e qualche uno di me, e così questo aver bisogno l'uno dell'altro sia cagione e vinculo a conservarci insieme con publica amicizia e congiunzione.[16]

'Today these words are a cruel mockery. When in need I was completely abandoned.[17] And even my "friends" from the bright days of Rome and Florence during the 1430's today criticize my writings, quoting out of context, for instance, my most beautiful sentiments:

> Non è potere della fortuna, non è, come alcuni sciocchi credono, così facile vincere chi non voglia essere vinto. Tiene gioco la fortuna solo a chi se gli sottomette.[18]

"What of famines, disease, death, and the plague?" they cry. "What can your diligence, your strong and constant persevering spirits do against them?" I admit I was idealistic and overly optimistic then, and moralistic in interpreting history. But what do I say about the plague?

> Fugga el padre, fugga el figliuolo, fugga il fratello, fuggano tutti, poiché a tanta forza di veneno, a tanta bestemmia, nulla si truova che giovi se non fuggirla. Fuggansi, poiché altra arme o arte cóntroli niuna ci vale. Non si può, non propulsare, non difendere quella rabbia mortifera ed essecrabile. Adunque vorranno i savi prima salvare sé fuggendo, che rimanendo non giovare ad altri e nuocere a sé. Piaccia a' piatosi non meno la salute sua che una vana opinione di grazia.[19]

I was idealistic, but not a fool! Later, in book two, when I have Battista object to Lionardo that very few are lucky enough to find a good woman from a good family and also attain a decent dowry, I have Lionardo reply:

> Ma facciasi come consigliava quel servo Birria apresso Terenzio: 'Non si può quel che tu vuoi; voglia quel che tu puoi.'[20]

I now realize more acutely that there are vast limits to what *virtù* can accomplish. But even then I knew that part of wisdom was recognizing limits and moderating one's desires.

> E se la fortuna a voi toglie le già date e bene adoperate ricchezze, che si dee fare se non portarlo in pace e forte? Volere con malinconie, con miseria d'animo acquistare o riavere quello che a noi sia vietato, sarebbe pazzia, sarebbe servire, sarebbe certo essere infelice.[21]

The difference is that now I realize all too well that much more is barred from us, that the sphere for the exercise of *virtù* is much reduced.

'The priests accuse me of impiety, religious indifference.[22] "Not by our own efforts, etc. etc. etc." Have they read my works?

> . . . quand'io lasciava adrieto così fatta e innanzi a tutte necessaria cosa, quante altre credi tu utili e commodissime ora mi sieno fuggite dinanzi e nascose drieto? . . . pregare Iddio che alla tua nuova sposa dia grazia d'essere fecunda con pace e onestà della casa . . . Ancora di nuovo dirò tanto: mai si resti di pregare Iddio che conservi nel congiugio onestà, quiete e amore.[23]

So there, I've said it: providence helps us overcome fortune. "Niuna cosa si truova tanto difficile che a noi quella col favore d'Iddio non sia molto facilissima."[24] How and to what extent I leave to the mice and men of the schools. God must have better things to do besides answering every little prayer! Who is to blame anyway? I realized even then that the vast majority of human ills comes about by our lack of prudence, fortitude, and by our own laziness.

'Perhaps a better appreciation of my views on *virtù* at that time can be had by understanding my constant invectives against idleness and laziness. My conception of the purpose of human life had changed from that of my early writings. I finally realized that man was made to manage things, to preserve friendship, and to build up human society. In brief,

> Platone scrivendo ad Archita tarentino dice gli uomini essere nati per cagione degli uomini, e parte di noi si debbe alla patria, parte a'parenti, parte agli amici.[25]

And

> . . . tutti [i detti dei filosofi] piace nell'uomo non ozio e cessazione, ma operazione e azione.[26]

If the purpose of being human is not ideally to be a solitary scholar, but to accomplish great works and deeds, *virtù* turns out to be the set of moral qualities that allows one to accomplish them. That, at root, is why I was and am against idleness.

> Né mi può non dispiacere la sentenza dello Epicuro filosofo, el quale riputa in Dio somma felicità el far nulla. Sia licito a Dio, quello che forse non è a'mortali volendo, far nulla; ma io credo ogni altra cosa potere essere a Dio di sé stessi forse meno ingrata e agli uomini, dal vizio in fuori, più licita che starsi indarno.[27]

'But, to finish at last, I must admit honestly that some of what I wrote then I simply no longer believe.

> E non stimo io essere altro felicità se non vivere lieto, sanza bisogno e con onore.[28]

If this is happiness, the result of acting virtuously, there must be very little of it in the world.

'I also wrote

> A conseguire laude si richiede virtù; a ottenere virtù solo bisogna così volere sé tanto essere, più che parere, tale quale desideri d'essere tenuto. Per questo si dice che alla virtù pochissime cose sono necessarie. Come vedi, solo la ferma, intera e non fitta volontà basta. . . . Ma non ci stendiamo in disputare quanto sia facilissimo conseguire la virtù.[29]

I would ask my younger self, ''If it is so easy to attain excellence, then why are there so few in any given profession or field who attain it? Is it because there are so few who really want excellence? Or isn't it just as often the case that *fortuna,* blind circumstances, prevents one from excelling, from accomplishing great and praiseworthy deeds?''

'I see, finally, that old Giannozzo was right. I was then too ''educated'', without his experience. It is folly to hope to exercise *virtù* beyond one's own limited life, especially in public affairs. As he said:

> Ogni altra vita a me sempre piacque più troppo che quella delli, così diremo, statuali. E a chi non dovesse quella al tutto dispiacere? Vita molestissima, piena di sospetti, di fatiche, pienissima di servitù.[30]

He was right: "si vuole vivere a se, non al comune."[31]

* * *

The third and last 'manuscript' (Codex Monacensis Latinus 8717) purports to contain a work from Alberti's later life. He looks back on his writings of the early 1440's, particularly *Teogenio, Profugiorum ab aerumna,* and *Fatum et Fortuna.*

'Having for some years now worked as an architect, and having met with some success, I am content with life. And so I was surprised last night, while going through my old papers, to rediscover my sentiments on *virtù* and *fortuna.*

> Aggiungi ancora la poca concordia dell'uomo quale egli ha con tutte le cose create e seco stessi, quasi come giurasse in sé osservare ultima crudeltà e immanità. Volle el suo ventre essere pubblica sepoltura di tutte le cose, erbe, piante, frutti, uccelli, quadrupedi, vermi, pesci; nulla sopra terra, nulla sotto terra, nulla che esso non divori. Inimico capitale di ciò che vede e de quello che non vede, tutte le volle a servitù; inimico della generazione umana, inimico a se stesso.[32]

'Once again, the cynicism and suspicion of *De Commodis* surfaced. I realized that *fortuna* can most easily ruin the rash and the rich. The ideal was the stoic sage, Genipatro, who, old and wise, is glad to be free from the storms and strivings of his youth, free from the burdens of riches, and happily spends his time among his books, while discussing with his friends topics worthy and edifying. Happiness consists in

> viversi sanza cura alcuna di queste cose caduche e fragili della fortuna coll'animo libero da tanta contagione del corpo, e fuggito lo strepito e fastidio della plebe in solitudine parlarsi colla natura, maestra di tante maraviglie, seco disputando della cagione, ragione, modo e ordine di sue perfettissime e ottime opere, riconoscendo e lodando el padre e procreatore di tanti beni.[33]

What a contrast with *La Famiglia!* Here, in *Teogenio,* no thought of serving an empire, or a republic, or even a family is found. One

comes to *virtù* precisely by withdrawing from all political and family life. I had little hope that the internal moral qualities could be woven into the fabric of public life. I was on the defensive. One should simply strive to keep one's soul tranquil and serene.

> E come pospongo non la mia vecchiezza alla tua gioventù, così prepongo non le tue ricchezze e amplitudine alla mia povertà, non la tua populosa famiglia alla mia solitudine.[34]

'However, traces of public and familial spirit still survived. As Genipatro says to the brash Tichipedo, "Ma tanto te loderò quanto in salvare e onestare la patria tua e i tuoi espenderai non le ricchezze soie, ma ancora el sudore, el sanque, la vita."[35] And Genipatro praises the old for contributing to public life much more than the young. He asks Tichipedo,

> E sia quanto tu vuoi forza e consuetudine della gioventù avervi robusti, sofferenti in ogni fatica e disagio possiate la polvere, el sole, e' ghiazzi, e' venti, che utilità presterete voi giovani alla patria, alla famiglia vostra? Fugarete, ucciderete, sometterete a servitù con vostre mani e armi uno e un altro inimico.[36]

'Still, true riches and wisdom are within a person and can never be taken away. The ideal is a self-contained tranquility of soul that can never be lost:

> Non la perfidia degli uomini, non la iniquità della fortuna, non gli incendi, naufragi, ruine, potranno a me rapire tanta mia ricchezza quale io non tema perdere . . . E qualunque ivi sia ignominia poco nocerà a quello animo ben composto quale in sé sia splendido e ornato de virtù.[37]

'Still, one criticism would be this. In my middle age, I portrayed Genipatro as I thought wise old men would be: happily free from active life, pleasantly inactive and retired—in sum, rather innocuous. Now I'd much rather be talking and joking with people out in the open, on street corners, making fun of politicians and other incompetents, than staying indoors, staring at my books, or, half bored, looking out my window!

'My greatest folly in this regard was what I wrote in *Profugiorum:*

> Modera la oppinione e iudizio, tempererai gli affetti e' moti dell'animo. Temperato l'amore, si spegne la volontà. Estinta la volontà, non desidererai; non desiderando, non ti duole el non avere o avere quello che tu nulla stime.[38]

"Si spegne la volontà!" *Mai!* I see now it's neither possible nor desirable.

'In another work of that period, *Fatum et Fortuna,* I have a philosopher on a small hill overlooking a river, the river of life that all must cross. Some swim alone, some on large rafts, i.e., ships of state, some float most dangerously on inflated skins, their pride easily punctured by the jagged rocks beneath the waters. And, as some of my more omnivorous readers will recall, I wrote that the best men of all were those who go it alone with only small boards, the good art of letters, to help them.

'However even then I had doubts that this was the best way to get through life,[39] and my philosopher reacts:

> What? Isn't it better, with friendly *virtù,* to sit upright in rafts, undergoing every danger, than to go through this life with one's own little board?[40]

I resolved the difficulty at that time in this way:

> While the strongest souls will try to obtain a small raft rather than some private board, still a free and peaceful mind, with no wrong, will flee far from those heavy labors and the great and constant dangers of the large rafts. And those who are content with taking care of a household find it hard to bear the foolishness of the crowd and public hoopla, while even the lazy masses find it difficult and hard to keep sensibly order, dignity, quiet and leisure.[41]

Here, a life devoted to good letters seemed best, the golden mean between the foolishness and commotion of public life and hateful leisure. But another alternative I didn't consider or felt to be foolish: why not find a wife and a small raft? Or make a raft with two or three close friends? This was perhaps behind the doubts I put into the mouth of the philosopher: is it best to go through life *alone* with one's own small board? I see now, too late, I was wrong when I said:

> Ma della natura e delle pazzie delle donne è molto meglio non ne parlare punto, che entrare in voler raccontare una cosa infinita et manifestissima.[42]

If I had shared a raft with a wife or a few close friends, I certainly would have borne misfortune better. This may have been the true golden mean that would have kept me from swinging from the heights of praise for *virtù* to the depths of cynicism and scorn found, for example, in *Momus*.[43]

* * *

A final word can be said about his last work in Italian *De Iciarchia* of 1469. The increased political stability of these years in Florence may have had an influence on his thinking. For, in this work, the confidence of *La Famiglia* surfaces once again, but with a new dimension —a wide political context for the exercise of *virtù*. This contrasts with the individualism of *De Commodis* and the works of the early 1440's, as also with the domestic setting of *La Famiglia*. The discussion revolves around the ideal ruler.

One of the leading themes of the work is that true riches are internal, moral and intellectual qualities that cannot be taken away.

> La vera ricchezza, giovini, sta in essere copioso di cose buone; e quelle sono ottime quali fanno l'omo ottimo, e non li possono essere tolte da persona. Questa sarà la virtù, figliuoli, la bontà, la sapienza.[44]

This view of *virtù* was found in *Teogenio*. But the sphere for the exercise of *virtù* has expanded to include the whole of society. The ideal society is ruled by the ideal ruler who is virtuous, is able to moderate or control himself, and so, Alberti reasons, will be able to rule or moderate others. This is certainly not the case, for living a virtuous life is no guarantee that one can rule. In Alberti's other optimistic stage, that of *La Famiglia*, a moralizing view of history predominated. Here, in *De Iciarchia*, a similar moralistic emphasis is seen in his approach to good government.

Other major themes are found.

> Restaci adunque solo imporre a noi stessi quanto appartenga alla cura dell'animo, e devemoci con ogni arte, industria, studio, assiduità,

> diligenza, preporci e cercare d'averlo tuttora cultissimo e ornatissimo. Questo potrà non altro che la *virtù*.[45]

Here again, he talks of the soul being adorned with moral qualities. These can be found in anyone who truly wants them and works hard for them.

Further, the old humanist theme returns: man is born for others.[46] The opposite of this, as always, is to spend one's time in leisure and idleness. Furthermore, in this work Alberti strongly emphasizes the harmful effects of idleness *on the community*.

> Nacque l'omo per essere utile a sé, e non meno agli altri. La prima e propria utilità nostra sarà adoperar le forze dell'animo nostro a virtù, a riconoscere le ragioni e ordine delle cose, e indi venerare e temere Dio. E questo officio qual presta e riceve l'uno all'altro in vita aiutandosi insieme a' bisogni umani, se tutti vivessimo oziosi, quanta sarebbe miseria essere nati omini![47]

He has confidence in the victory of *virtù* over *fortuna,* that by acting in accordance with those moral qualities we can overcome a very great many obstacles, more than is often assumed. For example, in the dialogue, Battista explains that man is made to learn, to investigate the world and pursue letters. Paulo objects that the success of one's pursuit of learning depends to a large extent on one's body and the ebb and flow of fortune. Battista responds:

> Concedere'ti in parte che le fortune siano commode agli studi quanto tu stimi, s'io non vedessi fra gli studiosi acquistar dottrina men numero di que' che sono più ricchi che di que' che sono men fortunati. E simile asserterei che la imbecillità del corpo disturba questa opera, s'io non vedessi che tutte l'altre cose per età mancano all'omo: solo le forze dello intelletto persino all'ultima imbecillità della vecchiezza tuttora fioriscono e inverdiscono.[48]

And the good influence of studies should break out of the school and into public life.

> E datevi a conoscere quelle che sono necessarie a chi desideri essere, quanto merita la virtù vostra, pregiato e amato da' nostri cittadini, e adoperato in le amministrazione della republica.[49]

The *iciarco,* the ideal ruler, exercises *virtù* on an even wider scale:

> Queste sono cose molto degne a uno omo civile, e molto utili a chi presunse essere moderatore degli altri, e avere perizia di quello che bisogni a reggere e conducere lo essercito e armati per terra e per mare, e avere perizia di quel che giovi a difendere e propulsare ed espugnare inimici e simili.[50]

Here, Alberti completely overcomes the timidity of *Fatum et Fortuna.* His confidence that the virtuous man can manage a large raft is founded on the belief that *virtù* can be inserted into the tumult of human affairs and have an effect even in large-scale politics.

> Buon fine sarà quello che giovi a te con molta onestà. Miglior fine sarà quello che gioverà non solo a te, ma insieme a molti con buon grazia.[51]

A final theme that is found throughout Alberti's works is expressed particularly well in the *De Iciarchia.* It was always Alberti's belief that a virtuous life was natural to man, that *virtù* made man happy, that man was, by nature, made to act virtuously. This may cost him much work and effort, but the pleasure of acting virtuously was taken as given and as far outweighing the sweat and hours of labor it entails. In Alberti's later life, when looking back on his own experience, it may have been this faith in the natural tendency of man toward *virtù,* and so happiness, that sustained his belief in the eventual victory of *virtù* over *fortuna.*

> La virtù in te studioso e vero bono omo sta in te conceputa e parata non come cose impostavi e collocata, ma come innata sanità e vita in un corpo animato e per essa ben fermo e valido . . . Questo incredibile piacere e contentamento tuo in te ti rende curioso osservatore di quello che ti fa vivere lieto e sufficiente a te stessi . . . O figliuoli, questa compiuta e divina beatitudine quale tu virtuoso contribuisci a te stessi facendo bene e adoperandoti in virtù, potrò io chiamarla altro che summa felicità? Dio ottimo essaudisca el desiderio mio e la espettazione mia, quanto io spero vedervi per simili vostre operazioni e costumi e virtù fatti felicissimi![52]

Notes

1. This quotation is actually found in Alberti's own *Pupillus*, ed. G. Mancini (Firenze, 1890), p. 126.
2. *De Commodis Litterarum atque Incommodis* in *Opuscoli Morali*, trans. C. Bartoli (Venezia, 1568), pp. 162ff.
3. *Ibid.*, 178.
4. *Ibid.*, 148.
5. *Ibid.*, 176.
6. *Ibid.*, 143.
7. These sentiments would be incorporated into one of Alberti's major works, *La Famiglia* (1433–34): « . . . e scorgo molti per loro stultizia scorsi ne' casi sinistri, biasimarsi della fortuna e dolersi d'essere agitati da quelle fluttuosissime sue unde, nelle quali stolti sé stessi precipitorono. E così molti inetti de'suoi errati dicono altrui forza furne cagione.» *Opere Volgari*, vol. 1, ed. C. Grayson (Bari, 1960), p. 4.
8. *De Commodis*, *op. cit.*, 168.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 145–6.
10. As Eugenio Garin writes, quoting from Alberti's *De Commodis:* «D'altro lato, di fronte al margine imprevedibile della fortuna cieca, ci mostra le risorse della disciplina interiore: 'escludere alle perturbazioni ogni addito . . . ; vivere vita quieta e tranquilla' attraverso il dominio di sé; recordarsi che 'all'uomo savio la coscienza sua è grande celeberrimo teatro.'» E. Garin, «Il Pensiero di L.B. Alberti nella Cultura del Rinascimento,» in «Convegno Internazionale Indetto nel V Centenario di Leon Battista Alberti,» in *Problemi Attuali di Scienza di Cultura* (Roma 1974), p. 38.
11. The only truth in these fictions is that Alberti did constantly complain of being attacked and criticized throughout his life. There is also some reason to believe an attempt was probably made to kill him. (G. Mancini, *Vita di L.B.A.*, 2nd ed., Firenze 1911, pp. 168–69). But in his writings there is, in fact, no evidence of a woman in his life.
12. *La Famiglia* in *Opere Volgari*, vol. 1, ed. C. Grayson (Bari, 1960), p. 9.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Because of various political rivalries, Alberti's family was exiled from Florence in 1387. This exile lasted forty years, preventing him from taking part in the early Florentine civic humanism.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
17. Alberti frequently complained of attacks and treatment by so-called friends. Here, I am using this fact as the basis for his changed views on *virtù* and *fortuna*.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
22. One of the remarkable facets of Alberti is how infrequently God and religious sentiments are explicitly mentioned in his writings.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 115–16.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
32. *Theogenius* in *Opere Volgari*, vol. 2, ed. C. Grayson (Bari, 1966), p. 94.
33. *Ibid., p. 68.*
34. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 73 and 75.
38. *Profugiorum ab aerumna* in *Opere Volgari*, vol. 2, ed. C. Grayson (Bari, 1966), p. 181.
39. The following paragraphs, expressing Alberti's doubts about his earlier views, are my invention. However, it is not unlikely that in his later life, when he wrote *De Iciarchia* (1469), he would have had doubts similar to those mentioned here. See the next section for *De Iciarchia.*
40. *Fatum et Fortuna* in *Opera Inedita*, ed. C. Mancini (Firenze, 1890), p. 140. The translation from the Latin is my own.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *De Commodis*, trans., Bartoli, p. 166. This passage is not unusual. Whether it is called anti-feminism or misogyny, Alberti's attitude toward women, except for a few passages in *La Famiglia*, is unrelievedly negative. This about-face at the end of his life is pure fiction, i.e., my own comment and criticism.
43. Partly because the bright side of Alberti's view of human nature has been so emphasized, E. Garin has recently stressed, as a corrective, the writings of Alberti in which the darker, more absurd side of human nature emerges. See Garin, *op. cit.* See especially Alberti's *Momus*, ed. G. Martini (Bologna, 1942).
44. *De Iciarchia* in *Opere Volgari*, vol. 2, *op. cit.* p. 209.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
46. See Cicero's *De Officiis*, I, 7, 22: « . . . ut praeclare scriptum est a Platone [Epist. IX. 358a], non nobis solum nati sumus ortusque nostri partem patria vindicat, partem amici.»
47. *De Iciarchia*, *op. cit.*, p. 198.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 212–13.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 223.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

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THE CONVERSION OF MANZONI'S L'INNOMINATO OR, THE REPRESSED CATHOLIC CONSCIOUSNESS OF A CRIMINAL

ANNETTE LEDDY

In the portrayal of l'Innominato's religious conversion, we see the conflict which runs throughout *I Promessi Sposi* between two distinctly different narrators. One narrator extends the lens of psychological realism, the subjective dimension of the historical novel. The other narrator is Catholic, and seeks to prove the intrinsically Catholic nature of human psychology.[1] This problem is complicated by the fact that we are presented with characters who are the products of Catholic upbringings within a Catholic culture and who therefore, whether or not they have rejected Catholicism, would "realistically" possess a Catholic psychology. Thus, while the psychological-realist narrator often successfully captures the experience of Catholic anxiety, the Catholic narrator often makes this anxiety less credible, interesting and profound by his habit of informing us of when a character's anxieties are those of a good Catholic and when they are those of a bad Catholic. The Catholic narrator often seems to intervene in the analysis of a character so he can give that character's crisis a Catholic name. It is almost as though the Catholic narrator is resisting the discovery of the universal; that is, the potentially non-Catholic nature of

these anxieties, the conclusion toward which a genuine historical novel would lead.

The conflict between these two narrators is evident in the peculiar mix of secular terms and concepts, and Catholic or religious terms and concepts which are used to describe l'Innominato's feelings. While psychological realism demands that a narrator reproduce the emotions and thought processes of a character in that character's approximate terms, the Catholic narrator strives to describe in religious terms the experience of a character who doesn't consciously think in religious terms. Thus, we find such sentences as, «Già da qualche tempo cominciava a provare, se non un rimorso, una cert'uggia delle sue scelleratezze.»[2] «Una cert'uggia» conveys l'Innominato's experience of the return of repressed guilt; «le sue scelleratezze» is the Catholic narrator telling us l'Innominato should feel very guilty indeed because he is a very bad man. In the sentence which follows, however, we find the Catholic narrator successfully refraining from such judgements: «Quelle tante ch'erano ammontate, se non sulla sua coscienza, almeno nella sua memoria, si risvegliavano ogni volta che ne commettesse una di nuovo, e si presentavano all'animo brutte e troppe: era come il crescere e crescere d'un peso già incomodo.»[3] «Se non sulla sua coscienza, almeno nella sua memoria» marks the successful collaboration of the two narrators, for here a distinction is drawn; l'Innominato's *memory*, activated by fear of death, is stimulating the rebirth of his childhood Catholic *conscience*, of which l'Innominato is as yet unconscious.

Ultimately, the two narrators give us the same information about l'Innominato's unconscious. For we do not question that l'Innominato experiences guilt, nor that he experiences it «come il crescere e crescere d'un peso,» nor do we question the probability of a religious conversion in an aging criminal. From the modern point of view of human psychology all this seems very plausible. It is only the Catholic narrator's assertion that l'Innominato is wicked before he consciously thinks in terms of wickedness that leads us to feel that the Catholic narrator is distorting a potentially convincing portrayal of a Catholic conversion.

Religious conversion is, of course, the perfect Manzonian subject.[4] This is because the true believer, as Manzoni was, believes his faith to

be immanent in all people. The self-realization of a person or the inner development of a character is therefore merely the conscious acceptance of this already in-dwelling faith, that is, conversion. From a psychoanalytic view, however, a person like l'Innominato, who was raised to the Catholic faith, (we know he prayed as a child because he later discovers a childhood prayer buried in the recesses of his mind) might very well retain a repressed Catholic morality until his death. Thus, from a secular point of view the conversion of l'Innominato is not interesting and convincing because Catholicism is the 'true' religion, but because it is an accurate portrayal of the coming to consciousness of a repressed Catholic consciousness. Seen from this point of view, the portrayal of l'Innominato is often brilliant and moving. For unlike Don Rodrigo, l'Innominato is given something of a psyche, both in terms of interior monologue and in terms of personal history, so that it is possible to see his evil both as a symptom of his victimization and as that which has victimized him.

Even before l'Innominato enters the action of the novel, we are given, in the long and tedious description of his unparalleled wickedness, the sense of a man caught in his own machinations:

> Nel fatto però, veniva anche lui a essere il faccendiere, lo strumento di tutti coloro: essi non mancavano di richiedere ne' loro impegni l'opera d'un tanto ausiliario; per lui, tirarsene indietro sarebbe stato decadere dalla sua riputazione, mancare al suo assunto. Di maniera che, per conto suo, e per conto d'altri, tante ne fece che, non bastando nè il nome, nè il parentado, nè gli amici, nè la sua audacia a sostenerlo contro i bandi pubblici, e contro tante animosità potenti, dovette dar luogo, e uscir dallo stato.[5]

We encounter him many years later, when the way of life in which he has trapped himself has taken a certain toll. The burden of the criminal life is evident first in his involuntary glance at the hands and face of Don Rodrigo. The internal price of having lived always alert to possible attack emerges in the physical description which follows:

> Era grande, bruno, calvo; bianchi i pochi capelli che gli rimanevano; rugosa la faccia: a prima vista, gli si sarebbe dato più de' sessant'anni che aveva; ma il contegno, le mosse, la durezza risentita de' lineamenti, il lampeggiar sinistro, ma vivo degli occhi, indicavano una forza di corpo e d'animo, che sarebbe stata straordinaria in un giovine.[6]

The first impression, that l'Innominato is older than his years, is the true perception, for his physical and mental alertness is not derived from an internal joy or pleasure in life, as is that of Federigo, for example. Rather, his alertness is the result of a lifetime of paranoia in which his body has been regarded as a tool or machine ever-equipped for use by its proprietor. The strain of this instrumental relationship with himself is just beginning to be felt by the part of l'Innominato which gives the impression he is older than his years. It is his spiritual part or, in non-Catholic terms, the part of all men which seeks gratification and meaning in life, which is giving up the battle he has been waging against his own desire for fulfillment.

The desire for domination which on one level has been l'Innominato's driving force throughout the years, necessarily involves the domination of self as a preliminary step. In this sense, the portrayal of l'Innominato offers insight into what today we would call the compulsive criminal. One crime demands another; not only to preserve one's reputation and life within the criminal world, but also because committing a new crime is the only way to effectively repress pain or guilt over the first crime. «Ne' primi tempi, gli esempi così frequenti, lo spettacolo, per dir così, continuo della violenza, della vendetta, dell'omicidio, ispirandogli un'emulazione feroce, gli avevano anche servito come d'una specie d'autorità contro la coscienza....»[7] L'Innominato, by placing himself in a situation in which he must continually act to defend himself, has successfully avoided the return of repressed guilt. In the past then, the struggle to save his life has been one with the struggle to repress guilt. The presentiment of a natural death threatens this habit of perception. This death «veniva sola, nasceva di dentro; era forse ancor lontana, ma faceva un passo ogni momento; e intanto che la mente combatteva dolorosamente per allontanarne il pensiero, quella s'avvicinava.»[8] L'Innominato, as a man in the habit of struggling to survive, must now seek his survival in a different manner. His repressed Catholic consciousness tells him that *eternal* survival demands not the repression of guilt, but the confrontation of it.

A non-Catholic criminal of l'Innominato's age might feel that the internal and external costs of continuing to repress a lifetime of guilt, or simply continuing to live the criminal life, would no longer be

worth the little gratification derived from being alive. Thus, criminals in other novels unconsciously seek to arrange their own deaths, as does Lovelace in *Clarissa.* That which in our time is experienced as bitterness, weariness, and a confused sense of despair over the unrealized potential of life, is in this Catholic novel experienced as «certi momenti d'abbatimento senza motivo, di terrore senza pericolo.» For l'Innominato, these feelings signify the presence of God in his heart, the possibility of self-realization in eternity.

We know at this point that l'Innominato is a Catholic; that is, he seeks an internal self-realization for which God is the only available name. But he seeks to evade this realization because of the prerequisite confrontation of his past actions, because of fear of retribution both internal and external. He therefore moves to repress his emerging consciousness, or, in Catholic terms, his conscience: «Ma, non che aprirsi con nessuno su questa sua nuova inquietudine, la copriva anzi profondamente, e la mascherava con l'apparenza d'una più cupa ferocia; e con questo mezzo, cercava anche di nasconderla a sè stesso, o di soffogarla.»[9] Thus, l'Innominato immediately gives his word to Don Rodrigo «per chiudersi l'adito a ogni esitazione.» As he feels himself beginning to regret his offer, he acts to repress this regret by ordering Nibbio to oblige Don Rodrigo. This specific incident, therefore, illustrates the psychological pattern which the psychological-realist narrator tells us has been operative throughout l'Innominato's life.

As l'Innominato awaits Lucia's arrival, he experiences a dread and anxiety which is not implausible given his state of mind. This is to say that the psychological-realist narrator has established a strong internal, non-didactic motive for his character to dread Lucia's approach. The Catholic narrator now makes these apprehensions appear incongruous and a mere ideological tool:

> Cosa strana! quell'uomo, che aveva disposto a sangue freddo di tante vite, che in tanti suoi fatti non aveva contato per nulla i dolori da lui cagionati, se non qualche volta per assaporare in essi una selvaggia voluttà di vendetta, ora, nel metter le mani addosso a questa sconosciuta, a questa povera contadina, sentiva come un ribrezzo, direi quasi un terrore.[10]

The Catholic narrator here intervenes in the first person («direi») when the development of the character does not demand it. Rather, he subverts his own ideological purpose by this intervention, for he places the emphasis on Lucia as the instigator of l'Innominato's guilt. The Catholic narrator here gives us the sense that Lucia's arrival is an objective event ordained by God to save l'Innominato. But in order for the psychological-realist narrator to show the immanent nature of the Catholic faith, Lucia's arrival should be presented as the objective event which merely signifies the emerging subjective event: l'Innominato's internal religious conversion. While Lucia functions on one level of the novel as a saint or medium for the works of God, the Catholic narrator's loud announcement of this function portrays conversion less as a natural process of self-revelation and more as the vehicle of an ideology he seeks to promote.

For the modern reader, Lucia's arrival is best understood as the objective event upon which l'Innominato has projected his increasing anxiety. «che noia mi da' costei! Liberiamocene,» says l'Innominato, as though to rid himself of Lucia would be to rid himself of the anxiety he already understands as internally generated. L'Innominato then acts, in his habitual manner, to repress his feelings of guilt by asserting his authority over the now-perceived source of his guilt, Lucia. Here is the turning point in his life. For as he is about to send orders to Nibbio to conduct Lucia to Don Rodrigo, «.... un *no,* imperioso che risonò nella sua mente, fece svanire quel disegno.»[11] Thus we see that the imperative to repress guilt has been supplanted by the imperative to confront it.

In order to understand how this change has taken place, we must seek the origins of l'Innominato's self-punishing, self-destructive drive. In his introduction to l'Innominato, the psychological-realist narrator offers an environmental reason for his character's disposition: «Fino dall'adolescenza, allo spettacolo e al rumore di tante prepotenze, di tante gare, alla vista di tanti tiranni, provava un misto sentimento di sdegno e d'invidia impaziente.»[12] Thus, due to the historical circumstances in which l'Innominato grew up he found the life of crime more glamorous and enviable than the respectable life. Indeed, l'Innominato already possessed great wealth and position and found only more adoration as an outlaw. He had the 'honor' of assisting

princes in difficult enterprises, and sometimes of helping the oppressed against nobility; altogether he enjoyed a phenomenal, if not favorable, kind of fame: «Ma la fama di questo nostro era già da gran tempo diffusa in ogni parte del milanese: per tutto, la sua vita era un soggetto di racconti popolari; e il suo nome significava qualcosa d'irresistibile, di strano, di favoloso.»[13]

In addition to the rewards of the life of crime, there were many disadvantages, and one would not choose powerful badness over powerful goodness if goodness were more internally rewarding. Clearly l'Innominato did not find this to be the case, and we sense that his decision in favor of the life of crime is the inversion of Fra Cristoforo's decision in favor of the religious life. Fra Cristoforo finds revenge for his feelings of rejection by the aristocracy in defending the oppressed; that is, those more rejected than he. His anger is thus given an outlet consistent with its cause, though one might say he did not ideologically disapprove of the existence of the ruling class, only that he wanted to be one of them. His conversion then, is the repression of his desire to dominate as those who rejected him dominate; that is, with violence. But it is also the resolution of his problem, because while his class position is valuable in his life as a Capuchin, he has ostensibly rejected it and those who rejected him much more convincingly than ever before. He continues to use his position to attack those of position, though without actual violence. Nevertheless, we see the continuing impulse to anger and violence in his dealing with Don Rodrigo, and sense that there is perhaps more repression than resolution in Cristoforo's conversion. Moreover, it would seem that the Catholic narrator considers this repressive state the *essence* of virtue.

L'Innominato, on the other hand, already had the class position Cristoforo lacked. His choice in favor of the life of crime therefore appears to have been born of his belief that the resources of his illustrious birth and great wealth could not provide him internal gratification. The Catholic narrator naturally does not allow the analysis of l'Innominato's character formation to be carried to the extent that Gertrude's is, for example. L'Innominato's desire to be evil is simply given as a fact. «Fare ciò ch'era vietato dalle leggi, o impedito da una forza qualunque.... »[14] Yet even the fact that l'Innominato took up rebellion as a principle is revealing in the light of his later sense of

internal loss, and in terms of what we know of the demonic hero within the novel as a form:

> Thus the fundamental form-determining intention of the novel is objectivised as the psychology of the novel's heroes: they are seekers. The simple fact of seeking implies that neither the goals nor the way leading to them can be directly given, or else that, if they are given in a psychologically direct and solid manner, this is not evidence of really existent relations or ethical necessities but only of a psychological fact to which nothing in the world of objects or norms need necessarily correspond. To put it another way, this 'givenness' may be crime or madness; the boundaries which separate crime from acclaimed heroism and madness from life-mastering wisdom are tentative, purely psychological ones, although at the end, when the aberration makes itself terribly manifest and clear, there is no longer any confusion.[15]

The Catholic narrator refuses to understand l'Innominato's 'evil' as a social phenomenon, though the psychological-realist narrator clearly conceives of Gertrude's problem as significantly determined by conditions. Therefore, the implicit purpose of this novel, to portray consciousness as a historical phenomenon, is here explicitly betrayed. That l'Innominato's life is not portrayed as a 'search' is the mark of the failure of both the Catholic narrator and the psychological-realist narrator, for l'Innominato's unexplained evil reveals a secret admiration of this «tiranno straordinario», an admiration which is consistent with the world-view of the psychological-realist narrator, whose commitment to showing the workings of individuals carries him to a mechanistic view of the workings of society.

There is a kind of underlying philosophy of personality in this novel which surfaces in the words of the minor, somewhat corrupt characters for whom we have a certain fondness. We see it in the words of Cardinal Federigo's Chaplain who, upon being asked to usher in l'Innominato, mutters to himself, «non c'è rimedio: tutti questi santi sono ostinati.»[16] Don Abbondio understands this as a quality of both saints and sinners: «È un gran dire che tanto i santi come i birboni gli abbiano a aver l'argento vivo addosso, e non si contentino d'esser sempre in moto loro, ma voglian tirare in ballo, se potessero, tutto il genere umano.»[17] Later in his ruminations, he makes a more subtle distinction between good men and bad men.

«Quelli che fanno il bene, lo fanno all'ingrosso: quand'hanno provata quella soddisfazione, n'hanno abbastanza, e non si voglian seccare a star dietro a tutte le conseguenze; ma coloro che hanno quel gusto di fare il male, ci mettono più diligenza, ci stanno dietro fino all fine, non prendon mai requie, perchè hanno quel canchero che li rode.»[18] This quality, regarded with such irritation by the corrupt characters, is one which the psychological-realist narrator defines as strength of character; for in Cristoforo too we find this single-mindedness born of seemingly innate rage or violence. This is most evident in the physiognomical description of Cristoforo's eyes: «Due occhi incavati eran per lo più chinati a terra, ma talvolta sfolgoravano, con vivacità repentina; come due cavalli bizzarri, condotti a mano da un cocchiere, col quale sanno, per esperienza, che non si può vincerla, pure fanno, di tempo in tempo, qualche sgambetto, che scontan subito, con una buona tirata di morso.»[19] Cristoforo is a character perennially at war with himself, yet we sense that it is this internal conflict which compels him to act ceaselessly "for God." «Tutto il suo contegno, come l'aspetto, annunziava una lunga guerra, tra un'indole focosa, risentita, e una volontà opposta, abitualmente vittoriosa, sempre all'erta, e diretta da motivi e da ispirazioni superiori.»[20] Thus we see that Cristoforo's habit or compulsion to repress his impulse to violence is simply the inverse of l'Innominato's habitual repression of guilt, or the impulse to goodness. It is this violent streak, or extreme temperament, which is in the novel the requisite quality of greatness, either good or bad. Characters such as Don Abbondio or Gertrude, who lack this quality, are condemned to an eternal miserable corruption. With regard to Gertrude, for example, the psychological-realist narrator writes, «Il delitto è un padrone rigido e inflessibile, contro cui non divien forte se non chi se ne ribella interamente. A questo Gertrude non voleva risolversi; e ubbidì.»[21] The ability to completely throw off a mode of life and begin anew is one only those of a certain violent temperament can possess.

It is this notion at the very basis of the conceptualization of the characters which reveals the world-view which finally demands a didactic Catholicism and the intervention of the Catholic narrator. Because the psychological-realist narrator perceives temperament as existing outside history, as being a somehow innate quality, he finally

makes objective conditions, and therefore history, irrelevant. It is the traditional bourgeois view of society and human nature as essentially static, unchanging. As Moravia observes,

> Manzoni's conservatism, . . . like all conservatisms, is decadent and fascinated by corruption, yet incapable of finding a solution on any but the aesthetic plane. *The Betrothed* is a nineteenth-century villa, not a temple, and the air we breathe there is not dogma but social conservatism. This decadent conservatism, or conservative decadence, leads directly, as we have already noted, to Catholic realism, or the attempt to overcome corruption by means of propaganda.[22]

Because the psychological-realist narrator sees both personal and social corruption as inevitable, religion *is* essentially the repressive mechanism it appears to be in the case of Fra Cristoforo. It is simply the most effective way to keep unruly or lazy temperaments under control, to keep corruption from swelling into destruction. It therefore follows that the psychological-realist narrator should have the secret admiration for the criminal which characterizes the bourgeois, who makes an idol of the bandit cowboy or the Mafioso Godfather. This secret admiration is a kind of envy of the man who implicitly admits the ungratifying life of the good and repressed in society by challenging the hypocritical good with an open 'evil', and who enjoys the ''pleasure of attacking civilization with its own weapons.''[23] Because of his view that society's nature is static, the psychological-realist narrator cannot portray l'Innominato's criminal life as a search for gratification any more than the Catholic narrator can. But his secret admiration is felt by the reader, because it is this which causes us to identify with l'Innominato's painful process of self-revelation, and to feel the catharsis of his encounter with the cardinal.

L'Innominato's encounter with the cardinal is the dramatic embodiment of l'Innominato's confrontation of the guilt which signifies his desire for fulfillment. This scene functions brilliantly on both the religious and psychological levels, and marks the successful collaboration of the Catholic narrator with the psychological-realist narrator. So successful is it, that one can potentially read the scene as one between a patient and his analyst in which the analyst/cardinal initiates the 'transference' of l'Innominato's guilt onto himself. L'Innominato, torn between the desire for relief from internal anguish and the

humiliation of being forced to seek this relief externally, is met by an authority figure who lacks the imperious, judgemental quality of his own internal voice. Not only does the cardinal not judge l'Innominato; he accepts his guilt as his own. «Certo m'è un rimprovero,» says the cardinal, «ch'io mi sia lasciato prevenir da voi; quando, da tanto tempo, tante volte, avrei dovuto venir da voi io.»[24] The cardinal here functions much as Lucia does in the scene discussed above. L'Innominato there perceived Lucia as the embodiment of his guilt so that he could externalize his feelings and then rid himself of them by ridding himself of Lucia. Here the cardinal externalizes l'Innominato's feelings so as to help him confront them.

The cardinal then tells l'Innominato that he loves him; that he has always loved him, and that he is the one he should most have desired to see had he believed it were possible. This declaration of love, occurring in conjunction with the cardinal's acceptance of guilt, seems to allow l'Innominato to feel he can somehow love himself. The desire for punishment is thus replaced by the desire for love, or self-acceptance. «L'Innominato stava attonito a quel dire così infiammato, a quelle parole, che rispondevano tanto risolutamente a ciò che non aveva ancor detto, nè era ben determinato di dire; e commosso ma sbalordito, stava in silenzio.»[25] The fact that l'Innominato certainly could not have determined to say the cardinal loved him reveals by its seeming inconsistency the more profound psychological consistency of the scene. Federigo goes on to inform l'Innominato that God has touched his heart, and then explains the agitation l'Innominato has been experiencing as the presence of God in his heart. «Non ve lo sentite in cuore, che v'opprime, che v'agita, che non vi lascia stare, e nello stesso tempo v'attira, vi fa presentire una speranza di quiete, di consolazione, d'una consolazione che sarà piena, immensa, subito che voi lo riconosciate, lo confessiate, l'imploriate?»[26] In our terms, the cardinal is here telling l'Innominato that it is the perceived possibility of love which is creating his inner turmoil, because he is unable to love himself or feel that he deserves love. L'Innominato thus sees his desires objectified both in psychological terms and in religious terms, for the cardinal here ostensibly tells l'Innominato that the possibility of living in accord with himself (becoming one of God's) is what he seeks. The moment of catharsis occurs when the cardinal

then transfers l'Innominato's guilt back onto him, that is, when he defines l'Innominato as an evil and universally feared criminal. L'Innominato here trembles and experiences a surprising sense of relief, because he is finally forced to confront his own cruelty. Because his reason for committing these cruelties has been revealed to him, or at least emotionally understood by him, he welcomes the sense of guilt which he need no longer resist, but is free to make amends for. For that something which l'Innominato feels devours him is his deep and long-buried desire to be loved and to love in return, to experience a self-fulfilling oneness with the world. The cardinal, who tells l'Innominato God has inspired him as well with a love for l'Innominato which devours him (the cardinal), is again the objectification (projection) of l'Innominato's desire to be loved. L'Innominato finally bursts into tears, «come vinto da quell'impeto di carità.»[27]

L'Innominato, having accepted God, the Church, and the reform of his evil ways, now slowly fades into the novel's oblivion. We are given only one brief glimpse of his interior life after the scene with Federigo. This occurs in the account of the night following the conversion, and consists of two paragraphs in which the psychological-realist narrator appears for the last time:

> Andò finalmente a dormire. Sì, a dormire; perchè aveva sonno.
>
> Affari intralciati, e insieme urgenti, per quanto ne fosse sempre andato in cerca, non se n'era mai trovati addosso tanti, in nessuna congiuntura, come allora; eppure aveva sonno. I rimorsi che gliel avevan levato la notte avanti, non che essere acquietati, mandavano anzi grida più alte, più severe, più assolute; eppure aveva sonno. L'ordine, la specie di governo stabilito là dentro da lui in tant'anni, con tante cure, con un tanto signolare accoppiamento d'audacia e di perseveranza, ora l'aveva lui medesimo messo in forse, con poche parole;....[28]

Here the incongruity of l'Innominato's sleepiness with his newly acknowledged burden of guilt has meaning on both the religious and psychological levels of the novel. The Catholic narrator clearly means to assert that peace of mind follows acknowledgement of guilt and conversion to the "true" religion. This point is heavy-handedly made by the refrain «eppure aveva sonno.» The passage survives this didacticism, however, because it is psychologically realistic. L'Innominato's

sleepiness increases because the now harsh voice of his super-ego has supplanted the need for «L'ordine, la specie di governo stabilito là dentro da lui in tant'anni.» The external guards of the castle have been replaced by internal guards.

Whenever l'Innominato appears in the remainder of the novel, it is in the terms of the Catholic narrator, who presents him as a toy model of Catholic good works. It is interesting that conversion is presented primarily as a public act in this novel, as though one of the advantages of conversion is the abolition of an inner life. L'Innominato is now entirely an ideological vehicle, serving only as an excuse for the Catholic narrator to argue the benefits of conversion.

The account of l'Innominato's way of life at the time of the siege is a tedious, repetitive, overcompensating description of the great joy experienced by his enemies upon his conversion. It is indicative of the Catholic narrator's lack of conviction that he does not so much convey the enemies' feelings as argue the various reasons why it would be "realistic" for them to rejoice. This logic is particularly specious in the explanation of why l'Innominato is not legally prosecuted.

The most striking aspect of this Catholic fairytale is the Catholic narrator's repeated reassurances that l'Innominato's social status remains utterly unchanged. He sacrifices none of the power and admiration he had as a criminal; if anything, his position is enhanced. L'Innominato's people believe «.... quella voce, annunziando che la volontà era mutata, non dava punto indizio che fosse indebolita.»[29] They perceive him «al di sopra degli altri, ben diversamente di prima, ma non meno; sempre fuori della schiera comune, sempre capo.»[30] The authority structure of l'Innominato's household remains intact. Perhaps the strangest passage is the description of the time of the siege, when we are told, «.... stabilì l'ore e i modi di dar la muta, come in un campo, o come già s'era costumato in quel castello medesimo, ne' tempi della sua vita disperata.»[31] Clearly the Catholic narrator feels Catholicism's biggest selling point is that it can transform the authority structure which fights for evil into an authority structure which fights for good, without at all altering the nature of the structure itself. This is because, as we have seen above, he believes evil does not dwell in a repressive social order but in human nature

itself. Evil leaders become Catholic leaders because one is born with «un animo come quello del loro padrone,»[32] with «quel tono naturale di comando»[33], or one is not. Strength is not a moral/religious category but a question of birth, and on this point the psychological-realist narrator is in perfect agreement.

Notes

1. The term "Catholic" in this paper necessarily refers to (Manzoni's) Jansenism, which emphasized the individual's direct responsibility to God, and predestination of the soul. The Catholic narrator is clearly Jansenist and each character who is given an interior life seems to have a Jansenist conscience.
2. Alessandro Manzoni, *I Promessi Sposi* («La Nuova Italia» Editrice, 1935), p. 379.
3. Ibid.
4. While I distinguish between Manzoni the author and the two narrators of the novel, my sense of the narrative conflict is clearly informed by my knowledge of Manzoni's Jansenist intention.
5. Alessandro Manzoni, *I Promessi Sposi*, p. 372.
6. Ibid, p. 378.
7. Ibid, p. 380.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid, p. 381.
10. Ibid, p. 388.
11. Ibid, p. 389.
12. Ibid, p. 371.
13. Ibid, p. 374.
14. Ibid, p. 371.
15. Georg Lukacs, *The Theory of the Novel*, (The MIT Press, 1971), p. 60.
16. Alessandro Manzoni, *I Promessi Sposi*, p. 427.
17. Ibid, p. 444.
18. Ibid, p. 457.
19. Ibid, p. 68.
20. Ibid, p. 82.
21. Ibid, p. 383.
22. Alberto Moravia, *Man As An End*, (Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1965), p. 217.
23. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, (Seabury Press, New York, 1972), p. 94.

24. Alessandro Manzoni, *I Promessi Sposi,* p. 430.
25. Ibid, p. 430.
26. Ibid, p. 431.
27. Ibid, p. 433.
28. Ibid, p. 475.
29. Ibid, p. 474.
30. Ibid, p. 475.
31. Ibid, p. 432.
32. Ibid, p. 474.
33. Ibid, p. 566.

VERGA AND THE REALIST CINEMA

ROBERT ALAN SPIEGEL

In *Against Interpretation,* Susan Sontag writes that

> Style is the principle of decision in a work of art, the signature of the artist's will. And as the human will is capable of an indefinite number of stances, there are an indefinite number of possible styles for works of art.[1]

Verga's writing had both a direct and indirect effect on the films of the period we call Neorealist. When Visconti adapted *I Malavoglia* for his film *La Terra Trema,* he was able to do so with practically no change in plot or location between the story written in 1881 and the film of 1948 because of the static nature of life in Aci Trezza. The film stands as a critique of the lack of solidarity among the exploited fishermen and an exposition of the way individual pride leads to disaster. Verga had frequently attempted to tell his stories from the point of view of his characters, with as little intervention as possible on the part of the narrative voice. Visconti attempts a parallel authenticity, using the fishermen themselves and their own Sicilian dialect, because, as he tells us in the prologue to the film, Italian is not the language of the poor.

Six years earlier Visconti had proposed Verga's *L'Amante di Gramigna* to the fascist censors as the basis for the film *Ossessione,* but it was rejected by the authorities who were unwilling to accept a story based on the presence of bandits in Fascist Italy.[2] Visconti then turned to James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* as the background for his film, but the theme remains the same, the effect of

passion on human actions. This theme is central to many of Verga's stories, among them *Cavalleria Rusticana, Jeli Il Pastore, La Lupa,* and *L'Amante di Gramigna.* Although the harsh economic and social realities of the period 1945–51 displaced the theme of passion and its effects in most of the better known films of the period, Verga's *verismo* as well as that of American writers like Hemingway, Steinbeck, and Dos Passos had a tremendous influence on Italian post-war filmmaking.

The famous preface to *L'Amante di Gramigna* outlines Verga's strategy for revolutionizing the narrative discourse:

> Io te lo ripeterò cosi' come l'ho raccolto pei viottoli dei campi, press'a poco colle medesime parole semplici e pittoresche della narrazione popolare, e tu veramente preferirai di trovarti faccia a faccia col fatto nudo e schietto.... Quando nel romanzo l'affinità e la coesione di ogni sua parte sarà così completa, che il processo della creazione rimarrà un mistero, come lo svolgersi delle passioni umane, e l'armonia delle sue forme sarà così perfetta, la sincerità della sua realtà così evidente, il suo modo e la sua ragione di essere così necessarie, che la mano dell' artista rimarrà assolutamente invisibile, allora avrà l'impronta dell'avvenimento reale, l'opera d'arte sembrerà *essersi fatta da se;* aver maturato ed esser sorta spontanea come un fatto naturale....[3]

Years later, André Bazin referred to *Bicycle Thieves* as one of "the first examples of pure cinema" for many of the same reasons mentioned by Verga: "No more actors, no more story, no more sets, which is to say that in the perfect aesthetic illusion of reality there is no more cinema."[4] Films as different in style as *Bicycle Thieves* and *La Terra Trema* attempt to obliterate the presence of the narrator and to leave the viewer as close as possible to the examined subjects, the poor worker and his son in *Bicycle Thieves* and the exploited fishermen in *La Terra Trema.*

Just as Verga minimized the presence of the narrator, so the collaboration of De Sica and Zavattini simplified the narration and excluded as much as possible the implied viewer's awareness of the presence of the camera. The story would then unfold itself in the most direct and uncomplicated way. This does not mean that there was not a carefully structured story. De Sica and Zavattini worked for

more than six months on the details of the narration. But as in the work of Verga, the structure serves to conceal rather than to call attention to the narrative voice.

A story like *L'Asino di San Giuseppe* shows Verga's attention to the minimal necessities of life, a theme that was reexamined by filmmakers like De Sica and Visconti in works such as *Bicycle Thieves, Shoeshine,* and *La Terra Trema.* As a symbol of humility and necessity, the donkey can be related to Ricci's bicycle in *Bicycle Thieves.* Everyone who comes to own the donkey is living a marginal existence. The donkey then becomes a symbol for the human condition lived at the level of bare survival:

> Pure ci sono tanti cristiani che non stanno meglio, e non hanno nemmeno quel cencio di tabarro nel quale il ragazzo che custodiva il branco dormiva raggomitolato davanti la fornace.[5]

While the story of *Bicycle Thieves* is based loosely on the novel of the same name by Luigi Bartolini, only the title and the main idea were taken from the original work. In De Sica's film as in much of Verga's work, we find the individual isolated with respect to a society which is indifferent to his needs. Only Ricci's immediate family and friends shelter him from a cold and disinterested mass in *Bicycle Thieves,* just as 'Ntoni's family is the main buffer between him and a cold sea and hostile environment in *La Terra Trema.* This failure to look beyond the immediate family structure is one of the social critiques suggested in both the work of De Sica and Visconti. In Verga, the individual is equally isolated in a hostile world, and often a victim of his or her passions as well. In the *Storia dell'Asino di San Giuseppe,* the narrative focus is on the figure of an animal, and the donkey is poeticized as well as being an object of sympathy:

> La notte il branco restava allo scoperto, accanto alla fornace, e le bestie si facevano schermo stringendosi fra di loro. Ma quelle stelle che luccicavano come spade li passavano da parte a parte, malgrado il loro cuoio duro, e tutti quei guidaleschi rabbrividivano e tremavano al freddo come avessero la parola.[6]

The sense of desolation and desperation characteristic of the world of Verga's stories is typical of the Neorealist films of De Sica, Visconti, and Rossellini. As D.H. Lawrence comments in his story "Reflections

on the Death of a Porcupine,'' ''One suddenly realizes again how all creatures devour and must devour the lower forms of life.''[7] Bazin sees this unpleasant fact as the thesis behind *Bicycle Thieves:*

> Its social message is not detached, it remains immanent in the event, but it is so clear that nobody can overlook it, still less take exception to it, since it is never made explicitly a message. The thesis implied is wonderously and outrageously simple: in the world where this workman lives, the poor must steal from the poor in order to survive.[8]

This truth is present in *Bicycle Thieves* and *Shoeshine* as well as in the *Storia dell'Asino di San Giuseppe.* But where De Sica projects a measure of compassion and love for his subjects, Verga relates the story as if it were a fact of nature, with a sense of fatality and dispassion. The animal is ultimately an object to be traded and devoured. At the end when he is finally bought for the last time with a pile of wood, the donkey is objectified into a useless instrument, worthless and worn out:

> Compro soltanto la legna, perchè l'asino ecco cosa vale!—E diede una pedata sul carcame, che suonò come un tamburo sfondato.[9]

In *Rosso Malpelo,* Verga deals with a world of primitivism and superstition. The title of the story itself combines a reference to red-headed and evil-haired, since Sicilians believe that red-headed people possess a malicious disposition. The central character is a subhuman type who exists in the world of animal instincts. He is referred to as a ''mangy dog'' («un can rognoso») who ''no one wanted around,'' («che nessuno avrebbe voluto vederselo davanti») and seen as an eyesore, ''surly, snarling and wild.'' («torvo, ringhioso, e selvatico»)[10] And there is a connection made between him and supernatural forces:

> Spesso, mentre scavava, si fermava bruscamente, colla zappa in aria, il viso torvo e gli occhi stralunati, e sembrava che stesse ad ascoltare qualche cosa che il suo diavolo gli sussurrasse negli orecchi, dall'altra parte della montagna di rena caduta.[11]

However, the supernatural element never becomes the focus of the story, which is essentially concerned with the problem of survival and adaptation to the world of necessity. But it is a presence that reminds the reader that the unexplainable exists, just as the fortune teller in

Bicycle Thieves is only able to indicate the course of the story but never detracts from the central problem, the recovery of the stolen bicycle.

In an essay entitled "Revival of the Matriarchal Spirit," in *Sex, Psyche, Etcetera in the Film,* Parker Tyler writes of the significance of the fortune teller in De Sica's film:

> It seems justifiable to speculate . . . that its source is a reaction felt in the depths of the Italian people, and confirmed by De Sica through Bartolini's novel, against the failure of the combined patriarchic symbols of church and state (the Pope and Mussolini) to have created a prosperous destiny for the nation. . . . Organized labor, church and police fail to provide effective aid in the hero-worker's search for his stolen bicycle; these institutions are inutile, indifferent, or actually obstructive.[12]

Verga's world, however, is a good deal more primitive than that of De Sica/Zavattini. It is one where fundamental emotions rule, frequently isolated from the context of social institutions. When the police do appear, as in *L'Amante di Gramigna,* they function primarily as a backdrop for the story of passion and as a counterpoint to the courage of the bandit. Most of the action exists on the level of primary emotion, where the state and its institutions do not figure. This absence is structured into Verga's work and suggests that the "ideological state apparatus" is as remote as possible from the actual needs and struggles of the Southern Italian peasant, as Carlo Levi was to demonstrate in *Cristo si è Fermato a Eboli.*

What is central for Verga, as he relates in *L'Amante di Gramigna,* is:

> il misterioso processo per cui le passioni si annodano, si intrecciano, maturano, si svolgono nel loro cammino sotterraneo, nei loro andirivieni che spesso sembrano contraddittori.... [13]

The passion in *Rosso Malpelo* is the primitive and almost unexplainable repetition of the fate of Malpelo's father. As Verga tells us:

> Dopo la morte del babbo pareva che gli fosse entrato il diavolo in corpo.... [14]

And it is this union of occult forces and economic necessity that drives the action of the story forward. Verga relates how Mastro Misciu,

Malpelo's father, had died. After everyone else had left work, Misciu continued:

> Questo è per il pane! Questo pel vino! Questo per la gonnella di Nunziata! —e così andava facendo il conto del come avrebbe speso i denari del suo *appalto,* il cottimante.[15]

And then:

> Tutt'a un tratto, punf! Malpelo che si era voltato a riporre i ferri nel corbello, udì un tonfo sordo, come fa la rena traditora allorchè fa pancia e si sventra tutta in una volta, ed il lume si spense.[16]

Malpelo's destiny is to reenact the scene of his father's death, as if Verga were telling us that nothing can really change in such a primitive environment. Like Visconti's exploited fishermen who work all night for the profit of the wholesalers, Malpelo's father dies trying to improve his miserable existence. But Verga implies a certain fatality in the struggle of the lower classes to improve their condition, without any suggestion of the lack of class consciousness which Visconti brings to his work. In Visconti's film, there is at least the suggestion that unity or the consciousness of its necessity could have begun to make a change in the living conditions of the exploited fishermen. In Verga's story, on the other hand, there is the reproduction of a primitive reality which seems to predate such conscious thinking. Malpelo's fate mirrors that of his father before him.

While Verga's work was unusually modern in suggesting techniques of interior narration and point of view that were more fully explored in the twentieth century by writers like Joyce, there is also something in his style which looks back to an older type of discourse. In *Against Interpretation,* Susan Sontag compares the modern with the Aristotelian tradition:

> In the Aristotelian tradition of art as imitation the writer was the medium or vehicle for describing the truth about something outside himself. In the modern tradition of art as expression, the artist tells the truth about himself . . . love, like art, becomes a medium of self-expression.[17]

Whereas a writer like D.H. Lawrence, who was himself deeply interested in the work of Verga, does use the material he creates as a

medium of self-expression Verga almost always effaces himself in describing the fortunes of the people he observes. There is an epic quality in the choices and actions of the individuals in his stories, even though their class origins are as low as possible. The critic Gyorgy Lukacs has written of the importance of practice in the success or failure of human purpose in a book called *Writer and Critic:*

> We are interested in how Odysseus or . . . Quixote react to the decisive events of their lives, how they stand up to danger, overcome obstacles.[18]

What is important in these tales is the interaction of the characters with world events. For Lukacs, "the inner poetry of life is the poetry of men in struggle, the poetry of the turbulent, active, interaction of men."[19] A story like *Jeli il Pastore* with its striking and passionate climax of the murder of Don Alfonso by the simple shepherd not only underlines the class differences which keep Jeli in an inferior position, but also shows an individual doing what he must in the face of a repressive social convention:

> —Come!—diceva— Non dovevo uccidirlo nemmeno?.... Se mi aveva preso la Mara!...

Verga's stories are typically narrated rather than described, in Lukacs' terms, establishing proportion and a necessary distance. As Cecchetti says in his introduction to *The She-Wolf:*

> This strict adherence to the world of his characters leads Verga to eliminate conventional description. He treats nature and all external elements as integral parts of his people. The grueling Sicilian sun that scorches the countryside, and the fogs and rains that destroy the crops, are never considered for their own sake, but are felt as components of the toil and struggle of his men and women.[20]

L'Amante di Gramigna makes use of a similar style of narration, and is also concerned with the fundamental theme of passion and its effects on the world of ordinary social convention. In both *Jeli il Pastore* and *L'Amante di Gramigna* the protagonist acts in accord with his or her true nature, and that nature is in direct opposition to the society that functions to repress or eliminate an individual's passions.

According to Pavese, "the richest style is the synthetic voice of the

leading character."[21] This is true both of many of Verga's stories and in the best films of De Sica, especially Ricci in *Bicycle Thieves,* the boys in *Shoeshine,* and Umberto D. As Cecchetti says:

> What Verga wanted to do was to interpret his Sicilian world not in literary terms but in the terms that were ideally those of that world itself. For this purpose, he adopted a very limited vocabulary, which consisted of words that were popular in quality, or would sound so in a given context. He condensed the narration as much as possible, eliminating everything except what seemed absolutely indispensable . . . His syntax became linear, and kept some traces of the syntax of Sicilian dialect—the language most of his characters would have spoken in real life . . .[22]

This very adherence to an observed reality characterized many of the more important films made in Italy between 1945 and 1951. *Bicycle Thieves* reduces the element of plot to an absolute minimum; the theft of the bicycle, the attempt to recover it, and Ricci's own theft. Although the motivation for the film was a literary idea, this literary idea was stripped down to its essentials for the film. There is the continual sense of the individual isolated in society. Where Verga's stories use a rural setting, most of the films of the Neorealist period are set in the city, and explore the problems that a new urban class had to confront following the war. These films are paralleled by the writing of Pavese, and his attempt to come to terms with the new class of Italian city dwellers cut off from their roots and struggling to give meaning to a world which had become increasingly hostile to human values.

With the disappearance of the quest for the revolutionary ideal proposed by Rossellini in *Open City,* and the subsequent economic and social problems which surfaced in post-war Italy, Italian directors attempted to probe the relationship between men, women, and their environment with an honesty and simplicity unequalled in the history of motion pictures. While De Sica proposed to deal with the problem at the level of human interaction and indifference, Visconti was more interested in exposing the roots of the economic conflict between classes. This interest links him directly to the world of Verga where

problems of survival and economic issues often play a key role. As Visconti said of *La Terra Trema:*

> I was seeking to express the whole dramatic theme as a direct result of an economic conflict. The key to the understanding of the spiritual and psychological conflicts is always social even if the conclusions I reach are those which concern the individuals whose cases I am describing.[23]

La Terra Trema includes an individual melodrama, but unlike *Ossessione,* it is set against the context of economic exploitation and the social drama of poor fishermen trying to better themselves, to break out of the cycle of poverty and despair. As a study in defeat it is an object lesson to show what happens to the poor if they are not united. Like Ricci in *Bicycle Thieves,* 'Ntoni is isolated and ultimately defeated. And like so many of Verga's heroes, his attempt to better himself runs up against the harsh economic and social realities of his world, set against the context of fatality and hopelessness.

The many shots of the masses, as well as the title, *La Terra Trema,* owe much to the Russian directors like Eisenstein and Pudovkin. They also hint at the kind of dynamic that could have been created by a unified class of fishermen. But this ideal is never realized due to the lack of the consciousness necessary to produce social change. And so 'Ntoni is reduced to a state of resignation and defeat, and the cycle of exploitation continues.

One of the theoretical concerns of the group of critics who wrote for the journal "Cinema" was the problem of landscape, and as early as 1941 De Santis wrote that primary in the cinema "ought to be the preoccupation with an authenticity, even if it is fantastic, of gestures and atmosphere, in a word of the factors that must serve to express the totality of the world in which men live."[24] When Visconti made *Ossessione* in 1942 it was to the surprise of the Fascist censors who thought they were getting a simple adaptation of a harmless American novel, *The Postman Always Rings Twice.* The result instead was the film which has been seen as the precursor of Neorealism and one which seriously criticized the squalid and repressive nature of Italy under Mussolini.

Ossessione is notable for the way it links characters with their background in a manner familiar to readers of Verga. And this environment, rather than being the ideal fatherland hoped for by the Fascist censors, was instead a place seething with passion, corruption, unemployment, the breakdown of the family, vagrants and sexual deviants. The linking of characters with their environments was something Visconti had learned from Jean Renoir, but it was also something he could have read in Verga. Gramigna's cleverness, for example, is explained with respect to his environment, the landscape in which he moves:

> Gramigna non era stanco mai, non dormiva mai, combatteva sempre, s'arrampicava sui precipizi, strisciava fra le messi, correva carponi nel folto dei fichidindia, sgattajolava come un lupo nel letto asciutto dei torrenti.... lui solo contro mille, stanco, affamato, arso della sete, nella pianura immensa, arsa, sotto il sole di giugno.[25]

The descriptions of the landscape here are not arbitrary, but serve to express attributes of the outlaw's character. His strength is seen in relation to his environment. In the same way, the lovers in *Ossessione* are always placed in the context of a society whose traditional structures—family, state, and church—are unresponsive. The figure of the Spagnuolo, the outsider, is created as a direct symbol of the kind of freedom that was impossible under Mussolini. As Visconti said:

> *Ossessione* was shot under a Fascist regime and at the time this character was the very symbol of revolution and freedom of thought.[26]

Like Gramigna, the Spagnuolo is in the tradition of outsiders who question the given social structure, whether Southern Italy in the nineteenth century or Fascist Italy in the twentieth. While the element of melodrama in Visconti often appears to remove his work from the realm of actuality, its social critique is nonetheless unmistakeable, as the Fascist censors were quick to recognize when seeing the finished work. The individuals in *Ossessione* are linked with their repressive environment as Malpelo is with his village and workplace, or Ricci and Bruno with modern Rome. The underbelly of Italian life which Visconti evokes in *Ossessione* is the counterpart of the poverty of the fishermen in *La Terra Trema* or the indifference of the Roman crowds to Ricci in *Bicycle Thieves*. It is a critique of an environment

which is hypocritical, composed of false institutions which dominate and control rather than assist and nurture. As such, the best Neorealist films, like Verga's stories, open up to the viewer or reader and call for a moral judgment on the world they present. Rather than being ideologically neutral they are charged with a sense of compassion and the need for change.

While it is clear that there are affinities between the Italian realist cinema and Italian realist fiction, another interesting connection is the link between the Italian realist cinema and American realist fiction. In speaking of this affinity, André Bazin has written:

> The aesthetic of the Italian Cinema, at least in its most elaborate manifestations and in the work of a director as conscious of his medium as Rossellini, is simply the equivalent on film of the American novel . . . It is in Italy, naturally and with an ease that excludes any notion of deliberate and willful imitation, that the cinema of American literature has become a reality.[27]

Bazin is referring here especially to *Paisan,* and its similarities with the work of Hemingway, and also mentions the importance of American soldiers in the Italian films of the period. In *Paisan* there is much of the linking of character and environment typical of the writing of both Verga and Hemingway. The marsh, for example, in the last episode in *Paisan* performs a dramatic function as well as being the setting for the action. Bazin observes that the positioning of the horizon at the same height, and the maintaining of the same proportions between water and sky in every shot produces the visual equivalent of men's feelings when they live their lives at the mercy of the elements.

Paisan is an attempt to chronicle, or rather to reconstruct, the events leading up to the liberation of Italy, but at the heart of the document is a problem that is not dissimilar from many works of the period, and that is the issue of gaps in communication that exist between people. Bazin has observed that the structure of the episodes is similar to a series of short stories. In each of these episodes, there are people separated from others, relationships which are confused or fragmented, and communications which are inadequate or completely lacking. As such there is a metaphysics of isolation running beneath the attempt to document an historical period.

It was left to filmmakers of the fifties and sixties, and especially artists like Fellini and Antonioni, who were writing scripts and criticism at the time of the Neorealist period, to more fully explore the difficult internal problems that Italian cinema turned to after "the problem of the bicycle" had been solved. But that is another discourse, and one where both aesthetic and moral problems become a good deal more complicated. As Bazin says:

> "Realism" can only occupy in art a dialectical position—it is more a reaction than a truth. It remains then to make it part of the aesthetic it came into existence to verify. . . . I think there is not a single Italian director, including the most Neorealist, who does not insist that they must get away from it.[28]

Notes

1. Sontag, Susan, *Against Interpretation,* Delta, New York, 1964, p. 32.
2. Armes, Roy, *Patterns of Realism,* Tantivy Press, London, 1971, p. 53. Visconti relates how the Fascist censors had rejected his manuscript with the words "enough of bandits!" written across it with red ink.
3. Verga, Giovanni, *Tutte Le Novelle,* V.I., Mondadori, Milano, 1940, p. 203–4.
4. Bazin, André, *What is Cinema?.* V.II., University of California Press, Berkeley, 1971. p. 60.
5. Verga, *Op. Cit.,* p. 325.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Lawrence, D.H., *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine,* Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1963. p. 203.
8. Bazin, *Op. Cit.,* p. 51.
9. Verga, *Op Cit.,* p 327.
10. Verga, *Op. Cit.,* p. 187.
11. Verga, *Op Cit.,* p. 190.
12. Tyler, Parker, *Sex, Psyche, Etcetera, in the Film,* Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1969. p. 49.
13. Verga, *Op. Cit.,* p. 203.
14. Verga, *Op. Cit.,* p. 190.
15. Verga, *Op. Cit.,* p. 188–90.
16. Verga, *Op. Cit.,* p. 189.
17. Sontag, *Op. Cit.,* p. 45.

18. Lukacs, Gyorgy, *Writer and Critic.*
19. Verga, *Op. Cit.*, p. 186.
20. Cecchetti, Giovanni, *The She-Wolf and Other Stories,* University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973. p. xvii.
21. Sontag, *Op. Cit.*, p. 39.
22. Cecchetti, *Op. Cit.*, p. xv.
23. Armes, Roy, *Op. Cit.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. Verga, *Op. Cit.*, p. 205.
26. Armes, *Op. Cit.* p. 59.
27. Bazin, *Op. Cit.* p. 39.
28. *Ibid.*

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TRE POESIE DI BERT MEYERS

Alcuni si lamentavano che le mie poesie erano troppo finite, troppo strette dall'inizio alla fine; che non avevo lasciato spazio all'immaginazione del lettore, nessuna apertura.... Ma hanno capito male— pensano che il mistero sia nell'incompleto e nell'incomprensibile. Per me il mistero sta in ciò che sembra essere chiaro e finito.... nella metafora accurata che non lascia spazio al dubbio. Una tale poesia implica un'ansia che cerca ordine e perfezione per evitare la follia. L'uomo si libera dall'ansia nel creare ordine e perfezione— ma giacchè sappiamo che ordine e perfezione in verità non esistono, l'ansia rimane come un mostro sotto la superficie chiara del classicismo artistico—basta ascoltare Mozart.

Bert Meyers nacque a Los Angeles il 20 marzo 1928. Professandosi già poeta, lasciò la scuola superiore senza prendere il diploma e cominciò a frequentare vari gruppi di poeti dell'epoca, guadagnandosi da vivere modestamente con diversi lavori. Nel 1957, sposò Odette Miller; ebbero due figli. In questo periodo lavorò come corniciaio e doratore, ma poi per motivi di salute dovette smettere. Tornò a studiare aiutato dai fondi dell'Ingram Merrill Foundation, del National Endowment for the Arts e infine del Claremont Graduate School dal 1965 a 1967. Dal 1967 insegnò Letteratura Inglese e Comparata al Pitzer College a Claremont California. Morì il 22 Aprile 1979 a Los Angeles.

Le poesie che qui presentiamo provvengono dal volume *The Wild Olive Tree* (West Coast Poetry Review, Reno, Nevada, 1979) pubblicato pochi mesi dopo la sua morte. Altri suoi titoli sono *Early Rain* (1960), *The Dark Birds* (1968), *Windowsills* (1979).

Traduzione di Ted Cachey

PAESAGGI

1.

La città

La città cresce
da un tronco d'autostrada:
circuiti scintillanti,
un cristallo che palpita.

La notte spazzata via
come un vetro rotto.

Il giorno comincia.
Stampa i parcheggi;
le porte sono interrutori;
le persone impulsi di un sistema.

Spesso però, una sirena accade—
il lamento incredulo dell'uomo svegliato.

E il cielo, quel polmone marcio,
sanguina, poi s'annera;
le finestre sui muri
moltiplicano le loro cellule.

Ancora curiosa, la luna infetta
regola la sua lente.

2.

In Periferia

In periferia, la fabbrica—
il piccolo chimico di qualcuno;
immondezzaio, dove la città
continua a buttarsi via;

la ruggine coagula sui rottami di ferro;
un dolore nel bagliore alluminio del sole....

Un cerchione s'acceca
nel fosso; la polvere
vi spande la sua caterrata;
alcune macchine gialle
muoiono come girasoli,
lasciano cadere i loro pezzi in un campo.

Le colline sono un mucchio di stracci
in un secchio di sporco solvente;
alberi metallici raggrinziscono
nel fiammeggiare grigio del vento;
le erbacce si rovesciano rotolando
il loro filo spinato per le strade....

Un aereoplano ruggisce come spermatozoo
attraverso una crepa
nella pietra profonda dello smog.

3.

Lungo la costa

Tu, fissi (appoggiato come un malato)
dal letto incantato della macchina.

Una collina mordicchia il verde di un prato;
un artritico vecchio recinto
zoppica in su verso una nuvola.

Il fumo d'una piccola industria
diventa un'astrazione nel cielo.

Soltanto le mucche hanno raggiunto la perfezione.
Sembra vuota la loro mente quieta.
Sono necessarie al paesaggio....
Quando le mucche mangiano, la terra,
le ombre, anche i ciottoli,
si alzano e s'inchinano l'un l'altro.

Molto lontano, la periferia—
un cubo replica un'altro, come la pietra
al cimitero di guerra.

E tutto lungo la costa
il sole avanza sul mare.
I suoi parabrezza scintillano nelle onde.

TUTTO ATTORNO A ME

Tutto attorno a me, farfalle,
cardini aerei
cercano la porta ideale.
Lo stridore d'una cicala
restringe un luogo nel cortile.
Tutto si scalda
da un cenno d'albero.

Un uccello sgocciola come rubinetto.

E la cagna sta sempre lí,
guardando in basso.
Correre, dormire, non ricorda.
È difficile essere cosciente.

Di qua, posso guardare l'autostrada—
formiche su un davanzale.
Il profilo della citta si va scarabocchiando,
un aereoplano, come un pesce, sembra galleggiare.

Qua vicino una fabbrica sta fumando,
ci sono anch'io tra i suoi piccoli portaceneri.

D'improvviso, un dinosauro,
o Roma, sorgerà
per poi cadere
nelle crepe
d'un muro cencioso.

Noi facciamo cose meravigliose
senza sapere come,
simile al pollo la cui merda bronzea
costruisce un altare sotto la stia.

Ma, tuttavia,
uno si sente giù.
Stamattina, un campo,
uno stormo di sassi
addormentato nella sua nebbia....
Questo mondo è dipinto
su un vetro che deve
rompersi.

Posso ancora
pagare l'affitto
e le strade non sono rivestite
di cadaveri ancora.

PIANO PIANO

Noi anche, abbiamo cominciato con gioia.
Poi, è venuta la malattia;
poi, la povertà.
Eravamo poveri, così poveri,
i nostri figli erano i soli nostri amici.

Piano, piano,
attraverso rabbia e dolore,
l'amore si è giustificato,
come i chiodi nella casa
durante la tempesta.

Non so come, abbiamo creato la speranza,
un battere sicuro
nel polso dell'ombra;
un diapason
nel marciapiede dei sogni.

Di notte, ero io quello
che diventava un violoncello
tirato dalle corde delle nostre strade,
dove ronza la memoria
a se stessa come un pneumatico.

E tu, matta come un clarinetto
dove la strada si divide;
un paese, gocce di pioggia nella macchia;
il miele lento che sgocciola
dal vecchio mestolo del cielo....

il perchè ho paura della morte.
Io giuro per le ali
che l'amore si spande dalla mia cintola.
porterò la tua canzone
finchè le mie corde, stanche,
saranno rotte.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

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Teresa Lazazzera is a graduate student and teaching assistant in Italian who hopes to receive an MA in June. She is also an aspiring journalist.

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Bob Spiegel is a filmmaker whose last feature film assignment was produced by Dino de Laurentiis in Tahiti and Bora Bora. He is currently working on a documentary being shot in Los Angeles for RAI (Radio Televisione Italiana) and completing an individual PhD in Italian Cinema and Literature.

Ph.D. DISSERTATIONS IN ITALIAN STUDIES at UCLA, 1970–80

As a bibliographical reference, *Carte Italiane* is including the following list of dissertations in Italian Studies completed at UCLA through the departments of Italian and Comparative Literature from 1970 to 1981.

This section of the journal will be supplemented in future volumes by the addition of dissertation summaries. We hope that this bibliographical information will prove useful to students and scholars of Italian Studies everywhere.

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